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No. 149

N° 149

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 29 March 2007

Jeudi 29 mars 2007



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 29 March 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 29 mars 2007

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HANDGUN AMMUNITION

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I am pleased to move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services should request the chief firearms officer to conduct a study to identify ways of better regulating ammunition which includes consideration of additional mechanisms to further restrict and/or ban the sale and possession of ammunition for handguns and to share relevant findings with federal and provincial/territorial partners.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Duguid has moved private member's notice of motion number 49. Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Duguid, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Duguid: Private members' business is one of those few times in this Legislature when MPPs can consider bills and resolutions in a non-partisan way. While I know it doesn't always work that way during this time, I've placed before the Ontario Legislature today a resolution that I hope is considered in a non-partisan way, because it does have the potential—and I say "potential"—to make our communities safer. This resolution simply asks the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to request the provincial chief firearms officer to study and consider potential alternatives to restrict the sale and/or possession of handgun ammunition.

My intention, through this resolution, is to allow us to explore this issue in a more informed and comprehensive way. It simply opens the door to more informed dialogue. I expect that, if passed, this resolution will provide the Ontario government, other governments across Canada, the public and this Legislature with well-researched alternatives that could provide more tools to our police to keep our communities safe and make it more difficult for criminals to get their hands on ammunition.

If we can find a way here in Ontario to further restrict, or even prohibit, the unauthorized possession of handgun ammunition, firearm-related fatalities and injuries could be reduced and our communities made safer as a result. This is not just my view; it's a view shared by many in

the law enforcement community. I had the opportunity to speak with our Toronto police chief, Bill Blair, on the weekend about this resolution, and I can tell you, he strongly supports it.

While there are a number of issues I'd like the chief firearms officer to consider, I want to first outline two key reasons to support this resolution. First, I expect most Ontarians would agree that with the exception of police or peace officers, there's really no valid reason for anybody on the streets to have in their possession handgun ammunition unless they're planning on using it in a criminal way or a harmful way.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Or you're Norm Gardner.

Mr. Duguid: That's a good one—and I said that because I want that in the minutes.

Here's why finding a way to make unauthorized possession of ammunition illegal can help our police in making our community safer.

Consider this: A police officer confronts a street gang. One member is carrying an illegal handgun. They can bust him. The other member is carrying ammunition, perhaps for that gun or maybe he ditched his gun when he saw the police coming, somewhere in the bushes. Unless that gang member has committed another crime, he not only gets to go home scot-free; he gets to bring his bullets with him to use another day. That's just not right. It doesn't make sense. In fact, I'd suggest that's almost insane, and I think most people in the public would think that's the case.

Secondly, some in the law enforcement community have expressed concerns about the need for improved record-keeping and monitoring of ammunition purchases. I can't say whether that's because of insufficient regulations for retailers or insufficient compliance by those retailers with the current regulations. That's something I would hope the chief firearms officer could determine. Either way, it seems logical that police should know who's buying ammunition, where they're buying it and how much they're buying.

Let me be forthright about this resolution. I don't contend that this is the answer to all our problems with regard to public safety. Restricting access to firearms ammunition, in and of itself, will not prevent criminals from obtaining handgun ammunition illegally through smuggling or the black market—just as restricting access to firearms doesn't prevent criminals from obtaining smuggled or stolen handguns. It could, however, make handgun ammunition less available to criminals, less

convenient for criminals to obtain, and I think that's a good thing.

In my view, outside of use in a registered firing range or at a target competition, there's no need for anyone to have handgun ammunition in their possession. To the best of my knowledge, hunters use long guns, not handguns, for hunting. I had the opportunity yesterday to chat with a friend of mine who's a representative of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. They wanted to clarify my intent with regard to this resolution, and I understand why. Let me take this opportunity to clearly state that this resolution is not meant, in any way, to impact hunters with long guns. Let me also confirm that target shooters using handguns would not be prevented from using them in shooting ranges or in competitions.

Here are the issues I'd like the chief firearms officer to consider:

(1) Making it illegal for a person who is not authorized to possess or transport a firearm to be in possession of ammunition. This could be specifically for handgun ammunition or it could be for all ammunition.

(2) Another option is restricting possession and use of firearm ammunition to firing ranges and target-shooting competitions.

I've looked into this. Originally, I was thinking of bringing it forward as a private member's resolution, but I found there were a number of complications involved here, and I can get into those. There are a number of complications, so I want the chief firearms officer to take a look at that and see if these complications can be worked out and, if not, this may be something that may be a little bit difficult to bring forward.

(3) Restricting the sale of handgun ammunition to firing ranges. Again, there are complications to doing this, but it's something that I'd like the chief firearms officer to at least have a look at and see if there is a viable way to get around some of those complications.

(4) One of the questions that the chief firearms officer would have to deal with is who should be exempt from these regulations—police officers, security officers—and what do you do with sporting target shooters and things like that. That's something that would have to be considered as well. We don't want to impact people who are making a livelihood with the use of ammunition. Whether it's handgun ammunition or long-gun ammunition, we don't want to impact those people at all, unless they're making that livelihood in a criminal way, and that's really what we're trying to get at.

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(5) How do you get around the fact that some ammunition can be used in both long guns and handguns? When I first got into this a number of months ago, I didn't realize that, but there are some calibres of bullets out there that can be used interchangeably between handguns and long guns. I don't know all the details of that, but I certainly think that's something that has to be taken into consideration by the chief firearms officer.

(6) Another question is: What do you do, if anything, about people who make their own ammunition? Appar-

ently, there are a lot of people out there who do that. That's something the chief firearms officer may have to consider as well.

(7) Are there any further considerations that could benefit our police that should be studied, such as the ability to maintain a databank of shell ballistics information for handguns, something that some in the policing area have suggested may be helpful in terms of tracing back where guns have come from in shootings, and perhaps even opening up a second crime scene for them if they're stolen guns from private gun collectors? It may even be able to open up a second crime scene to assist them in their investigations of shootings. It's something that has to be investigated. There are probably some complexities to that as well. There may be costs to that as well, and I don't know what they would be. But it's something we might want to have a look at to see if it's something that's practical.

(8) Are there ways to improve the current regime of recordkeeping by retailers of who purchases ammunition, and how valuable could this information be to the police? As I said, our own police chief in Toronto and others in the policing area as well have suggested that this is something the province should be taking a look at.

I considered bringing this forward as a bill instead of a resolution. I even went so far as to draft one. It sounded simple at first, but I came across a number of complications, as I mentioned earlier, and because of those issues, it convinced me instead to request the chief firearms officer of the province to use his expertise and experience, which is much greater than my own and that of probably most of us in this Legislature, to take a look at these ideas and give us more expert consideration.

This past year, we've seen a dramatic decrease in firearms-related fatalities and injuries, and that's great. This followed a year that saw a dramatic increase in firearms-related crimes. Working with our police services, the Ontario government has invested significantly, and I think wisely, in our efforts to tackle the serious problem of guns and gangs. We've made significant progress through strong enforcement, effective policing and investing in prevention.

The McGuinty government's actions have helped make our neighbourhoods safer and helped reduce gun and gang activity on our streets. While I'm sure government members are proud of those efforts, we also recognize that there's still much more to do. Our efforts to combat guns and gangs must be ongoing. We must vigilantly continue to try to remain one step ahead.

By passing this resolution calling on the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to request the chief firearms officer to consider and report on alternatives to restrict the possession and/or sale of handgun ammunition, we may be able to identify further tools and policies that can help make our streets safer and reduce firearms fatalities, injuries and crimes even more. I don't pretend to be an expert on handguns or long guns, but I think that by allowing our chief firearms officer to have a look at this, we can indeed make our communities safer.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I have very little time to participate in this debate. We could speak extensively about it, there's no question, not necessarily in terms of the import of this particular resolution, but the effort on the part of the McGuinty government to paint themselves in the eyes of the public as the great defenders of public safety.

The member from Scarborough Centre, whom I respect, I know is a good person who has worked diligently on behalf of his party and his government. I suppose it has to be extremely frustrating to someone like him and, I'm sure, quite a number of others in his caucus when they see someone newly elected in a by-election, with no political experience, have a new ministry created for him and be appointed, without political experience, to that ministry.

Mr. Kormos: What about an incompetent colleague who maintains his ministry?

Mr. Runciman: Well, that's another issue.

I think it's most disturbing. If you work so hard and so diligently on behalf of your party, there should be some recognition for that at the end of the day, but in fact that recognition is not there, and it's unlikely to arrive at any point in the near future.

What this member has been relegated to—and perhaps his seatmate and others—is carrying water for cabinet ministers and trying to sell the message. Clearly, anyone who is a careful observer of the history of the Liberal Party of Ontario—or of Canada, for that matter—knows that that positioning flies in the face of history. I just want to recite a couple of instances with respect to this.

If you go back to the summer of 2005, that was called the summer of the gun in Toronto. I'm sure you recall all the shootings and the killings in Toronto. The Liberal Attorney General, Michael Bryant, was later accused of being missing in action. He was nowhere to be seen during that rash of shootings. Then it was revealed, I believe by the *National Post*, that there was a plan before the cabinet, signed off by the Attorney General, Mr. Bryant, and the Minister of Community Safety, Mr. Kwinter; they had both signed off and endorsed a plan that was before cabinet that would have virtually gutted the justice system in the province of Ontario—\$339 million, signed off by the two justice ministers in the McGuinty Liberal government.

Some of the things that would have done: It would have had fewer offenders charged—there would be a real emphasis on pre-charge diversion, not just for young offenders but for adult offenders as well—more people released on bail, early release of prison inmates. They wanted to close about 2,000 cells across the province, the closing of jail beds. I think that provided us with a real insight into the true beliefs of Liberal Party members.

Of course, with the summer of the gun and the political firestorm that that created in the absence of the government, they had to throw that real inclination of a Liberal to have something that is less than supportive of public safety out the window. Of course, we've seen another example of that over the past few months as well

with respect to the Attorney General. He's a great one for trying to find a camera and trying to suggest to the public, "Boy, am I tough on those bad guys." Of course, we know what he tried to do in terms of pre-charge diversion.

I have to say a couple of things with regard to young offenders. I think about 50% of the young offender beds in the province are now empty because of pre-charge diversion. This saves money, perhaps, but does it have any real impact in terms of reducing youth crime? I would suggest not.

One of the first things this Liberal government did when they took office was to close Camp Turnaround for young offenders, a strict-discipline facility that had been created by the former Progressive Conservative government. It had dramatically reduced recidivism rates for young offenders. For political reasons and no other good cause, they've abandoned the strict-discipline approach to dealing with problematic young offenders and closed down a very successful pilot program, Camp Turnaround, just south of Barrie, Ontario.

The Attorney General, with respect to the Karla Homolka situation—boy, was that a show. The Attorney General was out in front of the cameras at every opportunity saying, "I'm going to stop Karla Homolka from getting out of prison, number one," and all of this sort of thing. Of course, we know that there was an appeal of the case with the original effort to exercise a provision of the Criminal Code to ensure that she could be monitored in terms of her movements. That was appealed.

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Where was the Attorney General in terms of that appeal? Where were representatives of the crown in terms of that appeal? Missing in action; they weren't there. Did they really care about Karla Homolka coming back into Ontario, other than the publicly saleable message it sent that the Attorney General likes to deliver?

Of course we've seen it recently at the federal level with Stéphane Dion, who is all of a sudden flip-flopping because it could mean the fall of the federal government and we could have a federal election and the Liberals are at the bottom of the polls. So now all of a sudden the federal Liberals are taking up the message that they're tough on crime too. Nobody believes this stuff; nobody believes it. If anybody has been reading the newspapers and watching television over the years, they know that Liberals have a very different perspective on how to deal with criminal justice issues and with people who are very serious offenders, a very different attitude, certainly not one we would characterize as being tough on crime—quite the opposite.

I think it's regrettable that the member for Scarborough Centre has pursued this line to try to continue to sell what is essentially a phony message. He could have used his time for much more constructive initiatives. He's a bright guy. He supported John Tory when he ran for mayor, and that was a wise initiative on his part. He probably would be sitting over here today other than the fact that Toronto is a very difficult challenge for Progressive Conservatives. But John Tory is changing that;

he's going to change that, so you may want to give it some thought.

The reality is, I think there is a strong possibility that after the October election, the member for Scarborough Centre will be sitting over here. I'm optimistic about his chances to be sitting over here following the next provincial election. I'm sure he will be an effective representative of his party from the opposition benches.

Mr. Kormos: We don't have a great deal of time. I am going to share the opportunity to address this resolution with my colleagues Paul Ferreira for York South-Weston and Cheri DiNovo for Parkdale-High Park.

I have no doubt that the author of this resolution has the same concern about the handguns that proliferate amongst especially young people, not only here in Toronto but across this province. And I have no doubt that he, along with every other member of this Legislature, wants to do everything we can to address the violence and the tragedy of maiming and loss of life. As far as statistics are concerned, to cite statistics indicating that there's a lower incidence of gun shooting in the last 12 months than there was 12 months before is of cold comfort to the mother of the kid who's shot dead. To tell that person, "Well, statistically, your odds against being shot were a little better than they were last year" is of cold comfort—no comfort whatsoever.

I find it remarkable that here we go again. This is private members' public business, but you have a member who wants to play the crime/fear card. God bless. I say, there's every good reason to be afraid of crime, regardless of what the stats are. I don't care how rare homicides are—they aren't—but I don't care how rare they become. To become the victim of a homicide is still a pretty scary prospect. But to play the crime/fear card and then offer up what is a non-solution seems to me to be, at the very least, disingenuous.

What, we've got to pass a resolution telling the minister to ask the firearms authorities to give him advice about how to best control illegal acquisition of ammunition? How stupid. It's the stupidest damn thing I've seen come across here in a long time. Talk about the Minister of Infrastructure Renewal being a bump on a log. What does this say about the Minister of Community Safety? Is he another bump on a log that he needs direction from the chamber to do his job? Lord thundering; this is incredible. It's also silly. It ranks, quite frankly, with the Liberal firearms registry as the so-called panacea for illegal gun crimes.

Before I came here I was a criminal defence lawyer. I acted for a whole lot of people who used guns in the commission of crimes: bank robbers, drug dealers, murderers. Not one of them, I tell you, had displayed the courtesy to register their firearm with the authorities before using it to rob a bank or to shoot up another drug dealer. Not one of them had the courtesy to get a firearms acquisition certificate. Well, of course they didn't. They're criminals.

I'm even further shocked when I read in the latest issue of Ontario Out of Doors, which features a glossy

photo of the Minister of Natural Resources, an article talking about how information from the gun registry is finding its way into the public domain such that lawful owners of registered firearms are having their postal codes published on websites. The suggestion is that it would be the rare 15-year-old who can't hack further into the system to get actual addresses.

I understand that there is concern about handguns that doesn't apply to long-barrelled firearms. I have no qualms. Look, down where I come from, people hunt, people are farmers who have to deal with various types of predators and rodents. I know people in my community, people in my family, who are sportspeople, who are Nimrods, who target-shoot, and I know them all to be incredibly cautious people, incredibly law-abiding people.

The problem is—look, it's just like the Percodan that's being sold in the corner tavern, the high-potency pain-killer. Almost inevitably it was prescribed by a doctor, and somebody who acquired it lawfully is putting it out into the unlawful drug distribution system. Inevitably, ammunition that's used by criminals—because let's understand what you've got to do now, Mr. Duguid. You know what you've got to do now. There are registries. One of the remarkable things and one of the things I'm proud of about Canadians is that we've always had some of the toughest gun laws in the world, short of totalitarian regimes, which of course forbid them.

You need a firearms acquisition certificate. Now the standards are even higher. You need possession-only licences. You go through some pretty rigorous training; I'm familiar with the training program that people have to go through to acquire a firearm. When you buy ammunition, you've got to produce one of those licences, have your name and address and other ID recorded with the identification of the ammunition that you're purchasing. That's not a bad thing. That's a good thing, and gunsmiths and gun dealers and sporting stores I talk to agree that it's a good thing.

You made a number of recommendations. Why didn't you ask the Minister of Community Safety to start policing gun shows? Because you know, don't you, that gun shows are the one place where you can circumvent the traditional standards for buying ammunition. If there's any hole in the system, Mr. Duguid, it's at those gun shows. Quite frankly, the legitimate retailers, who work hard to regulate the sale of ammunition and who work hard to ensure that only people who are entitled to purchase it can purchase it, are resentful of the laxness of any standards at gun shows. So let's be a little more specific. Let's talk about ensuring that gun-show vendors of ammunition have to utilize—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Am I wrong on this, Mr. Ouellette? You'll have an opportunity to speak to it. Let's make sure that they have the same standards as other retailers.

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But at the end of day it's all about this: The reason the author of this resolution had some problems looking at other avenues is because of what's called the Constitu-

tion. We don't have jurisdiction provincially to enact criminal law. That's the problem. It's called the Constitution, and its predecessor, the British North America Act—these little legal complications that legislators have to concern themselves with.

The fact is that the handguns that are being used out there to kill innocent people and to wreak havoc in our communities are stolen or smuggled into this province, into the country—end of story. I beg you, sir, to identify one incident of shooting in this city over the course over the last four years and seven months in which some hood on the street was using a firearm that was registered to him in the course of using it. I'm not aware of any. If you are, enlighten us. I look forward to it. We got a real problem.

Mr. Duguid: That has nothing to do with what's in front of us.

Mr. Kormos: Oh, hell's bells it has nothing to do with what's in front of us. It has everything to do with what's in front of us. The fact is that bullets are tiny little things, and stolen bullets, smuggled bullets and bullets purchased by lawful purchasers but then sent out into the illegal marketing of bullets, just like Percodan acquired by lawful prescription then entering the drug underworld, are going to be there. The fact is that it's a lot easier to secrete a bullet than it is a handgun. You understand what I'm saying? The fact is that the crisis that we have is in handguns, illegal handguns, illegal firearms. I believe that. I believe that law-abiding gun owners are eager to make sure that they have the proper training and have the firearms acquisition certificates and the possession licences, as apparently they are now called. I believe they're prepared to—and if they're not, they're going to have imposed on them some pretty harsh criminal penalties for unsafe storage of firearms, amongst other things.

I think there's a real problem—I've got to tell you, I think there's a real problem which the author of this resolution doesn't address—with the rare person who has these mega-collections. You've read about some of them. That's scary stuff. You've got people with darned arsenals in unsecured apartments in highrises. We saw an incident of it a while ago. I think that's totally unacceptable. We have no reason to be tolerant of that type of acquirer of firearms who doesn't engage in the type of security you need. The fact is that if there has been a break and enter and people have stolen those firearms, there hasn't been an adequate level of security, and I think there should be high levels of culpability on the part of that person.

But this resolution does nothing—nothing—to enhance the efforts of policing, because at the end of the day, it's all about the number of cops you've got out there on the street. At the end the day, it's all about being able to deal with the underground activity. Look, people who smuggle and traffic in illegal guns don't put billboards up. It's the very nature of criminal activity. They have no interest in television ads or in big newspaper advertisements saying, "Meet me here to buy your

guns." The policing of that type of illegal and organized activity is very labour-intensive. All the laws in the world amount to squat if you don't have cops out there enforcing them. The fact is that the level of funding of policing in this province is so low that police services across this province, big-city and small-town like where I come from, are hard-pressed to even deliver core policing services, never mind embark on specialized and intensive activities like infiltrating and doing surveillance and the investigative work involved in uncovering gun smuggling rings or illegal gun trafficking rings.

The other interesting observation that has to be made is that, because of this government's restriction of anti-crime funding—or anti-gang funding, rather—to the city of Toronto, what it has done is driven that criminal activity out into the suburbs and beyond. So you see, Niagara region, that whole corridor, the whole biker corridor, if you will, along the 401, through London to all of those communities where the activity has been pushed out into, doesn't have that intensive funding to allow for the anti-gang activity.

This resolution, I'm sure, will pass. I'm not going to be a party to it. I'm not going to lend my name to it because I think it's fluff, it's spin, it's typical Liberal sucking and blowing, that simultaneous sucking and blowing that Liberals are wont to do. As I've said so many times, Mr. Ferreira, the nice thing about being a Liberal is that you don't always have to be a Liberal. You can campaign like a New Democrat; govern like a Tory. When it comes to law and order, you can try to jump on the bandwagon and show that, oh, you're tough and you're serious about people's homes getting broken into, about drug dealers shooting people on the streets. But if the best you can do, if the best you can come up with, is to tell the minister to ask, to plead with his firearms officer, "Please, do you have any ideas that could maybe help us control the sale of ammunition?"—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: If that's the best you can do, what are you gunning for, Mr. Duguid?

Ms. DiNovo: He's gunning for his job.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Duguid is gunning for his job, as Ms. DiNovo wittily interjects.

Well, the resolution will pass, but I won't be here when it does.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough—Rouge River): I'm pleased to rise today to join this debate and speak in favour of the handgun ammunition resolution brought forth by my colleague Mr. Brad Duguid, the member from Scarborough Centre.

As the parliamentary assistant for community safety to the Honourable Monte Kwinter, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, let me say that I fully support this resolution to conduct the study outlined. On behalf the the Honourable Minister Monte Kwinter, let me also add his full support to this resolution as his ministry continues to pursue opportunities and ways in which to make Ontario a safer place to live, work and play.

As you know, this government is serious about crime and safety. We are committed to playing an active role in fighting and preventing crime to keep our neighbourhoods safe. When innocent citizens die from stray bullets, public concerns become our concerns. When a young man plays around with his dad's loaded handgun, public concerns become our concerns because Ontario safety affects all of us here today.

As a government official, I feel it is our job to support and ensure that the programs and initiatives helping to protect Ontario's families and children are implemented, continued and supported. This is why our government has invested \$51 million in anti-gun-and-gangs initiatives to give police and prosecutors the tools and resources they need to rid our streets and our communities of guns and gangs.

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Through our Safer Communities-1,000 Officer partnership program, we've helped police hire an additional 1,000 officers to patrol our streets and make our communities safe. We are hiring 12 new victims' services staff that will provide support to victims of gun crimes in addition to the 12 new probation and parole officers to work with the guns and gangs task force. These initiatives have meant over 250 additional officers to the Toronto Police Service, which has had a direct impact in my own riding. In the past, the Malvern community in my riding has been identified as an area with high gun-related activities. But through this government's plan to bring the crime rate down, we are seeing a difference in Scarborough-Rouge River.

The government has been tough on crime, but at the same time we've been just as aggressive with the causes of crime and the programs we've brought in for young people in our communities. Crime prevention is working in my community, and I believe crime prevention is working across Ontario. This is why I applaud my colleague Mr. Duguid for his hard work in putting forward this resolution to continue to identify ways of better regulating gun ammunition. I'm excited to say that this resolution could well bring this government one step closer, in our fight against crime, to eliminating gun violence in our streets. It will also allow us to continue to protect Ontarians and keep our communities safe, because we don't just want to combat crime; we want to stop it before it happens.

You will remember that this government also called upon the federal government last year to amend the Criminal Code, to impose mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes, to impose a reverse onus on bail for all gun crimes. All of these little things added together are what the communities we represent are asking us to do so that we can bring safety into our communities. I believe that this resolution will help us to get one step closer. It hopefully will bring back the statistics and those things that we can use to improve our legislation, to improve our programs in our communities, to help make them safer and hopefully represent our communities as we were expected to do.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this resolution. I know that all members of this House, from all parties, who share a genuine concern on this public safety issue are wanting to speak today. This is an extremely important issue, and I applaud the member from Scarborough Centre, like all members who wish to make the communities safer, so long as that is the actual intent. The member from Niagara Centre certainly emphasized a lot of key things in directing something that should already be taking place.

It's also important that we take the time to discuss strategies to deal with this important public safety initiative as opposed to just knee-jerk reactions to public safety based on the media story of the day. We've seen this kind of policy and ideology from the McGuinty government in the past. I can think of predominantly two examples. Of course, one is the infamous pit bull ban. I met with veterinarians who said that they had people come in whose pit bulls aren't spayed or neutered and who have no intention of complying. I see individuals on a regular basis going down the street and they don't have their dogs muzzled, and I've never seen a house that shows a sign that specifically depicts a pit bull living there. That's just one example, even though the overwhelming evidence specifically stated not to go in that direction.

Another is the suggested proposal by Dalton McGuinty and the Attorney General to completely ban the sale of legal handguns from the province because of the media hype surrounding the issue at that time. But I must say that the intent of the resolution is somewhat noble—although, after hearing the debate, it's clear to me that the member needs a lot more understanding and probably should get a briefing on some of the details about the impacts and what is already available out there—and that's to prevent firearm-related fatalities and injuries in our communities to make sure our streets and neighbourhoods are far safer for our residents. My father was a chief of police, my grandfather on my mother's side was a chief constable in his community, and I'm probably one of the only ones in this Legislature who actually has been shot at with intent. From that, I can give some of the background information that most people wouldn't even know.

When I spoke with parole officers and asked them, "Why is it that individuals were using guns in related crime activities?" the parole officers told me that they spoke to the individuals coming in to see them, and they specifically stated, "Why wouldn't I use a gun? Because most of the time, or virtually all of the time, the weapons offence is thrown out. So why wouldn't I use a gun as opposed to that?" If the target was there in the misuse, the criminal misuse of firearms, then it wouldn't be affecting law-abiding citizens.

Although the member states that his resolution is not another Liberal firearm registry boondoggle and it's intended not to impact legitimate target shooters, the member of this House in his own correspondence cer-

tainly acknowledged some of the problems with proceeding with this type of resolution.

Camp Samac in Oshawa has a rifle range indoors, and Boy Scouts use that on a regular basis. Guess what? They're shooting .22 long rifles. Well, the .22 long rifle is another cartridge that is used in the .22 handgun. It's the same thing. It would certainly cause problems when you're dealing with that issue.

When you talk about the registration—and I certainly hope the member deals with the issues—they obviously haven't checked with the federal legislation to find out. Have they even looked at the form to comply with, where they actually check in to find out—I can give you some of the details for the form. It's a seven-page form. It's not like a passport that's only—what?—four pages. This is a federal firearms registry, and nobody—not law-abiding gun owners—is opposed to that. They support those things. But when you look at certain things that they're asking for—about conjugal partners in the past two years and you have to get them to sign off. You have to sign off details. It specifically says:

"During the past five (5) years, do you know if you have been reported to the police or social services for violence, threatened or attempted violence, or other conflict, in your home or elsewhere?"

"During the past two (2) years, have you experienced a divorce, a separation, a breakdown of a significant relationship, job loss or bankruptcy?"

Those are the sorts of forms that you have to fill out before you're allowed to go out and actually purchase ammunition. If the members had taken the time to read all those details, they certainly would know some of that.

When you talk about other groups that would be affected—I mentioned the Boy Scouts, and that's just one small group. What about the Air Cadets, who regularly participate in shooting activities, or the Navy Cadets or the Army Cadets as well? They actively participate in shooting .22s, long rifles—yes, there are long rifles. However, that same ammunition is used as would be used, for example, in the ridings of the minister from Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, the minister from Sudbury, the minister from Timiskaming–Cochrane, the minister from Kingston and the Islands.

Another one would be a .44. A Ruger .44 is another rifle that is commonly used as a deer gun throughout Ontario. In all those ministers' ridings, I would say there are probably at least a number of individuals who use that. The same ammunition is utilized in a .44 handgun. What are you going to do in situations like that?

I think the member from Niagara Centre said it succinctly when he spoke about the details and the intent. This is going to be another boondoggle.

Some ammunition—as we've mentioned, the .22 is a perfect example—is going to cause all sorts of problems. The member also mentions record-keeping of ammunition, which has been in place since 1994. If you look at the legislation from 1994, it's very clear and specific on the process which takes place. Quite frankly, there was a lot of concern about this because the way records were

being kept in all the locations that sold ammunition was causing concern because it was accessible by other individuals. Many times they would come in, write it on, fill out all the information—the details of where you live, type of ammunition—and that was publicly accessible, which caused more problems than good. The only difficulty with that is that all the legislation that was passed at that time and the resolution here are superseded by the federal legislation, which gives specific guidelines for storage of ammunition and other details.

When you talk about other aspects of this, about eliminating bank robberies, this could equate to exactly that. We could eliminate all bank robberies. The best way to do that would be to get rid of all banks. It's just not going to happen. It's the same sort of thing. The member from Niagara Centre just went on with details about the fact that the individuals he defended had never registered a firearm.

I appreciate the time for debate. We look forward to hearing other individuals debate as well.

1050

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): First of all, I would like to commend my colleague Mr. Duguid from Scarborough Centre for bringing forth this resolution. As you'll know, it's with reference to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. It really is hopefully another step in the right direction towards controlling handgun crime, the homicide rate and violence on the streets of Toronto.

Just before making some remarks about this particular bill, I would like to first of all recognize the words of our honourable colleague from the third party, from Niagara Centre. He's quite correct: When you confront the family of a victim whose life has been snuffed out by a handgun crime, on an individual basis of course it a tragedy that no reparation can make whole again. But there is also, beyond that, the statistical or population-wide attempt to reduce handgun crimes to the extent that people do feel safer. As the member for Etobicoke North, who perhaps was subjected to more than my proportion of handgun violence, especially in that summer of the gun, the summer of 2005, I recall that one of the jobs I did not sign up for, that I did not anticipate having to fulfill, was attending the funerals of four young men, all of whom were black, who happened to be from my riding and were either involved in shootings within my riding or nearby—one of whom, by the way, Mr. Amon Beckles, a young man 18 years old, actually was attacked, shot and murdered on the steps of a church in my riding while attending the funeral of one of his friends who had been murdered two weeks before. You can imagine that as the MPP, as a doctor, as a father and as a son, when I confronted that kind of tragedy and waste of human life, when I saw this resolution brought forth by my colleague Mr. Duguid, I could do nothing but support him and wish him well in its implementation.

The member from Niagara Centre also made a very interesting analogy. He said, "What if this was all about Percodan?"—which, by the way, is a prescription

narcotic that is sold for recreational and entertainment purposes on the streets of Toronto. "What if this resolution had to do with Percodan?" I can tell you as a doctor that these types of resolutions, safeguards and regulations in fact do exist with things like narcotic prescriptions. They need to and they have to. Probably going forward, we would only serve the people of Ontario better if we were to actually strengthen these types of resolutions.

Some of the specifics of this: As you know, at any present time these days, an adult with a firearms acquisition certificate and proper ID can go into any gun shop and sporting goods store and purchase as much handgun ammunition as they wish. Record-keeping is modest at best. This is part and parcel of the directive that would be given to the chief firearms officer.

I was very privileged just last night to host the Honourable George Smitherman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, at a budget conference. But along with him as well was the Honourable Monte Kwinter, our Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. At least half of the questions that were directed to all of us had to do with violence and guns and gangs and their intersection. Any attempt we can make in the direction of getting some of these arms, this weaponry, the fuel, if you will, for these handguns off the streets and allow them only for legitimate causes—for example, law enforcement officers—is absolutely worthy of support. That is something that's incorporated within this particular resolution.

This affects the sale of handgun ammunition from retail outlets. It brings a little bit more scrutiny and a little bit more record-keeping, with further directives and studies to be undertaken by the various officials involved. I would say that not only is this necessary—because one of the things that I regret, as I see the urbanization of our cities—as somebody who was actually originally born in Chicago, what I have been witnessing, and I hope I'm wrong, is the slow and steady Americanization of a lot of our cities. Whereas Toronto and other cities are still, to this day, I think, thought of as relatively safe, pleasant, beautiful places to raise your kids, there are unfortunately pockets, regions, areas, districts that seem to be ushering in that era of the United States of Ontario, specifically with reference to guns and gang violence and "Are we going to put metal detectors in our schools?" That's the kind of world and community we do not want to see in Ontario, and I think it is resolutions such as my colleague Mr. Duguid is bringing forward today that will help move us in that particular direction.

After that summer of the gun, I was pleased to host the Premier of our province, the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, who came to that very church, to those very steps that I spoke about, at which Mr. Beckles, that young gentleman, 18 years old, whose life was snuffed out—at that very church, the Seventh Day Adventist church in Etobicoke North, he came to offer a program, a \$3-million commitment to engage with some of the faith communities to help youth at risk to seek other oppor-

tunities, other venues of expression than joining gangs and perpetrating gun violence. This, along with the resolution today and, at other times, a number of our other initiatives, including expanded policing services and so on, is really part and parcel of our overall guns and gangs strategy.

With that, I would simply say that this resolution deserves the support of every member and this member from Etobicoke North in particular. I would commend Mr. Duguid on bringing forward a resolution that is so thoughtful, well-crafted and, I would say, really embodies a lot of our aspirations.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I am delighted to join in the debate and support my good friend the member from Scarborough Centre.

I want to say to the people at home who are watching that Brad's a great member, and I'll tell you why: because he reaches out to all sides on this debate. He's particularly effective within our caucus. I come from a very rural riding, the richest agricultural riding in the country. This is an issue that I've had to learn about—the plague of gun violence—just as my good friend Mr. Duguid and my friends Mr. Qaadri and Mr. Balkissoon have learned about the challenge of crystal meth in my own riding. It's that ability to talk about the law-and-order issues we're facing in our respective ridings and how we must work together to snuff them out so they don't spread across this great province. I am particularly pleased to hear from my good friend Mr. Duguid that he talked to the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters so he could bring some clarity to his resolution and to his intent. I know they warmly received the fact that he did chat with them.

There are some challenges here. He started with a bill and realized that we need to go to the experts to work on this. I commend him. I believe that the question is right to go to the chief firearms officer. I think that's a prudent thing to do.

The question we're going to be faced with in this House is: Will we support our friend Mr. Duguid? Will this be a partisan issue or a non-partisan issue? We're going to find out very shortly whether or not we support this. If we can't support a colleague who is trying to represent his community and trying to ensure that people walking around with ammunition for handguns used to commit a crime—that is the reality today, and if we don't agree that that should stop—it'll be interesting to see that vote, and we look forward to it.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Duguid, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Duguid: I'd like to thank the members for Leeds-Grenville, Niagara Centre, Scarborough-Rouge River, Oshawa, Etobicoke North and Perth-Middlesex for participating in this debate and providing input here today.

A number of things have been said for and against today—most in favour, I guess. When you bring forward a resolution or bill to this House and the opposition really doesn't raise anything that specifically applies to what

you've got before them, you know it must be a pretty supportable piece of legislation or resolution, so I'm pleased at how the debate has gone today.

There was one interesting suggestion that came from the member from Niagara Centre that I want to get on record, simply because if the minister does in fact ask the chief firearms officer to do this, if this resolution does pass, perhaps the area of gun shows is something that could well be within the breadth of this resolution, something that could be looked at.

I want to also state that I was really surprised that the member from Niagara Centre would come out—he seemed so specifically against gun control. That surprised me. I thought the NDP were in favour of gun control. He specifically criticized gun control, and that really surprised me.

Interjections.

Mr. Duguid: Maybe his colleagues are trying to clarify what he said, and maybe later on he can. But I listened carefully to what he said, and he clearly appeared to be against gun control.

This resolution does two simple things. It allows the chief firearms officer to bring forward a report that I think will be very important to the minister. These two things can allow a couple of things to happen: number one, to ensure that it will be illegal from here on forward for people to walk on the streets without authorization with bullets and ammunition—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Duguid: I ran out of time.

1100

RENTAL ACCOMMODATION

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call on the government of Ontario to move expeditiously to establish and implement a comprehensive landlord licensing program, to ensure minimum standards for rental accommodation throughout Ontario, with the following features:

The program would be fully integrated with existing municipal property standards bylaws and part XIV ("Maintenance Standards" of the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006);

Administration and enforcement would be the responsibility of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and could be assigned to individual municipalities by agreement;

Landlords would be required to obtain a licence for each residential complex containing more than 10 residential units;

Annual licence fees would be paid into special funds dedicated to supporting program administration and enforcement;

Residential complexes would be regularly inspected and work orders would be issued to ensure compliance with minimum standards;

Repeated failure to comply with work orders would be dealt with by a rent escrow system, whereby tenants in the affected residential complex would pay part of their rent into a special account, administered by the landlord licensing program and used to ensure that repairs are carried out;

Serious infractions would result in prosecution and substantial fines could be imposed on conviction; and

That the government of Ontario report back to the Legislature on the implementation of this program during the spring 2007 sitting.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Ferreira has moved private member's notice of motion number 52. Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Ferreira, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Ferreira: I am honoured to rise this morning for my inaugural private members' hour in this place.

I am particularly pleased that my resolution calling for the implementation of a landlord licensing program across the province would have far-reaching positive implications for a tremendous number of Ontario tenants, including thousands in my home constituency of York South–Weston. As in many other ridings across our province, more than half the residents in my riding are tenants. They played a very instrumental role in sending me here to this place. Thus, I am delighted, as my party's housing critic, to be able to initiate the debate on this item and to speak out for Ontario's tenants and their interests.

Landlord licensing is not a radical or new concept. It is practised successfully in other jurisdictions, and I will refer to one of those later in my comments this morning. A province-wide system of licensing landlords would bring into force minimum standards for the upkeep and maintenance of private rental properties. Whether it's here in downtown Toronto or in Windsor or in Ottawa or in Thunder Bay, the standards and enforcement would be the same. Tenants across the province would receive a uniform level of protection under the law.

Why is legislating tenant protection so important? Over the past number of years, through my own community work and activism I have witnessed at first hand hundreds, in fact probably thousands, of rental units that are poorly maintained and where tenants are forced to live in deplorable conditions.

Yesterday, I spent some time in my riding visiting some of these apartments. What I saw wasn't pretty at all. Indeed, I think that members on all sides of this House would be appalled by the conditions that some tenants are forced to live in: cockroach and mice infestations; obvious signs of sickness-inducing moulds; a lack of basic safety devices, including window screens and fire alarm detectors. And this doesn't come cheap: a one-bedroom apartment for \$750 a month, a two-bedroom for \$900 and up. That's what the money gets you.

On my tour yesterday, I was accompanied by a member of our press gallery here. She wrote about what she witnessed, and for the benefit of those members who may have missed the article, I want to read out the first

couple of paragraphs because they paint a rather vivid picture of the poor living conditions faced each and every day by tenants in this province. I quote from her story:

"The cockroaches are everywhere. In Nakisha Charles' one-bedroom apartment, they swarm her infant son's baby bottle even in the fridge.

"Several floors higher, Yvonne Brown fights her own futile battle with the roaches who spill out of every cupboard and fall from the shower curtain rod.

"At night, Brown's 12-year-old daughter shouts out, 'Mommy, there's roaches in my bed.'

"Even worse than the infesting bugs are the broken smoke alarm, the missing window screens and the mouldy walls and vents in these women's Weston Road apartments.

"Repeated calls to the landlord have gone unanswered,' the renters said."

That last line warrants repeating: "Repeated calls to the landlord have gone unanswered."

Due to lax and shoddy enforcements of the existing hodgepodge of rules that we have, bad, unscrupulous landlords are able to get away with poor maintenance and deficient repairs. Tenants faithfully pay their rent every month, hoping that repairs will soon be made. In many cases they are not or they are done in such a sloppy, haphazard way that in fact the conditions become worse.

Why do tenants put up with this? As I'm sure all my colleagues here know, housing options for someone on a fixed or modest income are few; they're very limited. The wait for affordable housing in this province can last for 10, 12, 15 years I've heard of in some cases. Tenants are forced to take what they can afford, and greedy landlords take advantage of that reality and prey on them.

I know what some of my colleagues will say here this morning. They will say that there are good, indeed very good, responsible landlords across Ontario. I wholeheartedly agree and I applaud these honest landlords who take great pride in the upkeep of their buildings and complexes. However, I would argue that a province-wide landlord licensing program would give these model landlords a competitive advantage.

I envision, similar to what we currently have in the city of Toronto with restaurants and the like, certificates or posters prominently displayed in apartment lobbies showing the state of a particular building based on their licensing inspections. A tenant looking for accommodation would be able to make an informed choice, knowing that one landlord has properly maintained their property while another has not. In my estimation, that kind of transparency would provide great incentive for landlords across the province.

Tenants being able to withhold rent from landlords would provide yet another powerful incentive. My resolution calls for, as part of a comprehensive system of licensing landlords, the creation of holding accounts where tenants could deposit their rent monies until such time that repairs are adequately made. Earlier in my comments, I mentioned that landlord licensing exists in other jurisdictions. This holding or escrow account

system is a feature used successfully in these other jurisdictions. For example, in the city of Los Angeles, where landlord licensing is presently in effect, an integral part of their model is something called a "rent escrow account program," or REAP, as they refer to it.

REAP provides, and I quote from the Los Angeles city code, "a just, equitable and practical method to be cumulative to and in addition to any other remedy available at law." It goes on, "to encourage compliance by landlords with respect to the maintenance and repair of residential buildings, structures, premises and portions of those buildings, structures, premises...."

1110

The Los Angeles model also features rent reductions for tenants and a framework for substantial punitive fines for landlords that do not comply.

Some of my friends here this morning will, I'm certain, say that Los Angeles is a municipal example and that landlord licensing would be best left up to individual municipalities across the province. I may hear that. Unfortunately for tenants, municipalities, in the present funding context, have a difficult time enough delivering essential services. As we know, some of the largest municipalities in this province are cash-strapped and do not have the resources to properly do the job. I would argue that tenants, wherever they should happen to live in our great province, deserve the same kind of protection and enforcement, which is why the Ministry of Housing needs to step in and assume this responsibility. I would sincerely hope that my colleagues from the government side agree with me on this.

Back in 2003, the last time that we all had a chance to face the people, I heard many of them on the government side campaign on the need to increase tenant protection across the province, especially in the wake of the eight years that we had previously, where we saw the playing field tilted to a great degree toward the interest of landlords, especially the larger ones.

Implementing a landlord licensing program would provided much-needed increased tenant protection and assist the government in living up to their promise to do just that, and I'm glad to be able to offer my assistance in having them do that. As for my colleagues here to my right in the official opposition caucus, I have been heartened during my short two-week stint here to hear some of them distance themselves from that record of those eight years.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Amen.

Mr. Ferreira: Amen indeed. Support for this resolution would further that cleansing, purifying process, that conversion they're going through. I hope that tenants in their ridings in particular can count on their support so that we can move forward with this initiative.

At the end of the day, landlord licensing would be of benefit to scores of Ontarians who are presently marginalized and whose interests are too often neglected. When I came to this place, I came to be a voice for these Ontarians. This resolution is a modest one, but it is one that would begin to make a profound mark on improving

the quality of life for those who need the improvement the most. I urge my colleagues to support my call for landlord licensing and I look forward to their insightful comments this morning.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the presence of tenant activists who have come to observe the debate this morning. Most of them belong to the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, or ACORN, as they're known, an organization which I hope the members of this House had an opportunity to meet with yesterday during their first annual—I hope there will be many more—lobby day. I appreciate the kind assistance provided to me by the good folks at ACORN, which is a very tough nut to crack, on this resolution and other issues. ACORN has 6,000 members across the province and it is growing. To ACORN organizers and chapter leaders, thank you for your work and your vibrant spirit of community activism. It is indeed making a positive difference.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I want to start by welcoming the new member for York South–Weston to the House here today—or two weeks ago, as he mentioned—as a colleague. Already the member has shown that he will be an active participant in the Legislature and that he cares about his constituents. I also want to congratulate him on his first private member's resolution, which is a very apt resolution. I know that he has many tenants in his riding and that his intentions with this resolution are good.

I'm sure that on the campaign trail the member heard many stories about bad landlords. We all have heard those stories from tenants who have their problems—landlords who have refused to do proper repairs, landlords who have refused to provide the basic services, landlords who have rented apartments that weren't safe. In my riding this year we had an elderly couple whose daughter had to help to ensure that their apartment was warm enough in the winter, and this just isn't acceptable.

I understand that the intent of this resolution is to protect tenants from bad landlords, and no one could disagree with those intentions. Ontario tenants should have safe, comfortable places to live and have the security of knowing their home will be properly maintained. However, in my opinion, the reality is that landlord licensing will not accomplish this goal. It will not protect tenants from bad landlords. It will only punish the good landlords, drive unsafe apartments further underground and increase the cost of housing. The landlords who are renting unsafe apartments, the ones that don't even meet the fire codes, are going to be the same landlords who try to avoid the registration or the licensing process. Anyone who knowingly rents an apartment that is unsafe or below standard is not going to rush out and get their apartment inspected.

There are tenants out there who have good landlords. Unfortunately, they are the ones we don't hear from. No one ever says, "I'm going to write my MPP and tell him how great my landlord is." We don't hear about the

majority of landlords, the ones who fix problems right away or those who go above and beyond for their tenants. But those tenants are the ones who would suffer the most from landlord licensing. Those tenants don't need legislation to license their landlords. They won't get any extra value for it. But they, like all others, will have to pay for it because their landlords will have to pay to be licensed too, and that cost will be passed on to the tenants. This is the other problem with licensing landlords: The cost of licensing, both the fee and the time and the paperwork, would, of course, be passed on to the tenants. If a store owner is selling loaves of bread and the price that he pays his supplier goes up, wouldn't you expect him to increase the cost of bread in his store? Landlords are not going to lose money or earn less on their buildings because the government decides to license them. Their mortgages aren't going to go down just because the government adds another cost. They are going to be forced to raise the rent to cover the cost of licensing and the cost of doing the paperwork for the licence.

This resolution seeks to set up a licensing system to ensure minimum standards of maintenance and ensure enforcement of those standards. We need to remember that property standards are not a new idea. Municipalities already have the ability to set property standards and to enforce them. In fact, most municipalities do have property standards bylaws, and it is an area of municipal jurisdiction, a fact that the member acknowledges in the resolution by suggesting that administration and enforcement could be assigned to individual municipalities by agreement.

Currently, the municipalities have the authority to administer and enforce property standards, so this resolution seeks to create a new bureaucracy that will get us back to the situation that we presently have. The only thing that will change under the system proposed by this resolution is that there will now be a list of apartments, and landlords will pay to be on it. In fact, the city of Toronto, among its many new powers, already has the ability to license landlords and apartments.

I want to point out that during the hearings on the City of Toronto Act, we questioned Premier Dalton McGuinty's government on all the new revenue-increasing powers that they were giving to the city of Toronto, and the Liberal members on the committee assured us that they were just there to show how much they trusted municipalities. When the Dalton McGuinty Liberals amended the Taxpayer Protection Act to allow municipalities the ability to have new taxing powers, the Liberals assured us they would not be abused. When the Dalton McGuinty Liberals opened the door in the City of Toronto Act to new taxing powers and new fees, Dalton McGuinty assured us they wouldn't be abused. Well, the city of Toronto has already started musing about all the possible taxes and fees and licences that they could introduce: a new land transfer tax, a new tax on alcohol, a new tax on movies and sporting events, a new tax on parking, a road tax, and many others.

One of the other new powers that the city of Toronto is musing about is the ability to license landlords, and

again, that's what this resolution deals with. I've heard from one landlord who has a number of units here in the city of Toronto. On many of the apartments he has not raised the rents for five to 10 years. He says that he has been happy to reward good, responsible tenants with below-average rents. However, with the city of Toronto talking about licensing landlords and charging landlords, he is concerned that he will be forced to increase those rates.

1120

The president of the Greater Toronto Apartment Association warns, "If landlords' costs jump, rent hikes will follow." He also pointed out that only about 10% of the city's 300,000 high-rise units are in bad shape and said that licensing landlords would be like "using a baseball bat to kill a mosquito."

For the lower-end apartments, they have mused about a \$400-per-year licensing charge. That is an extra \$33 a month that will be passed on to the renter, plus the cost of staff time to fill out the paperwork. That will not be a positive for the average tenant in the province of Ontario.

As I said, the municipal property standards regime has the ability to do everything that the member, in his resolution, is putting forward here.

The member, in his presentation, mentioned that he hoped my tenants in Oxford or tenants in the rest of the province could in fact benefit from this resolution. I have never had one request, in my years in provincial politics, from a tenant or a landlord that was in support of licensing apartments, that someone had to have a licence to live in a home. In my mind, it's just unacceptable.

There's a balance between protecting tenants and not making it so difficult for landlords that they want to get out of the rental accommodation business. Landlord licensing will mean more red tape and higher costs for landlords, which decreases the incentive for people to get into the rental business.

As a result of changes that the Conservative government made, we have actually seen rental units being built in Ontario. The vacancy rate in Ontario is now well above the historical average. It's working. In fact, the rent control system we created is working so well that Dalton McGuinty actually broke his campaign promise to scrap the part of the Tenant Protection Act that he had promised to scrap because it was working so well.

What we need for Ontario tenants is more and better enforcement. I would agree with the member, in his resolution, that more needs to be done to enforce the property standards bylaws in all municipalities. We want to make sure that we are protecting tenants and cracking down on the bad landlords and the unsafe apartments without punishing the good landlords and good tenants. The question we need to ask is not whether landlords should be licensed, but whether the McGuinty government is doing enough to protect the tenants of Ontario from bad landlords. I think that is an area that warrants more investigation and discussion.

Unfortunately, I can't support this resolution because licensing landlords isn't the way to make up for the fact

that the McGuinty government is failing to protect tenants.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): It's my honour to speak to this courageous resolution. It's absolutely what we need. It's absolutely what the tenants of this province need.

I just wanted to provide the backdrop for this resolution, which is, of course, the inaction of the McGuinty Liberals on the tenant front.

What are we looking at when we're looking at the situation in Ontario? First of all, housing was my critic area until I was delighted to hand it to my colleague Paul Ferreira after his election, and I can tell you that there are 67,000 households in the GTA waiting for affordable housing. There are 122,000 in Ontario waiting for affordable housing.

This is a government that promised 20,000 units in 2003, and through the Freedom of Information Act, I can tell you that we have the answer to how many real affordable units they provided: 285. By "affordable," I mean in the \$300- to \$500-a month range, which is 30% of ODSP, OW, or minimum-wage earners. Of course, they'll tell you that they've provided around 2,000, which is still pathetic—it's still 10% of what they promised—but those are in fact only affordable for people making between \$30,000 and \$70,000. This is from the housing minister, Mr. Gerretsen, himself. I'm happy to provide any Liberal backbenchers with that information should they so request. So that's the backdrop to this. There is virtually no affordable housing, so what happens is that we have private landlords filling the gap that the government should be filling.

In Parkdale-High Park, we have about 10,000 so-called affordable units owned privately and we have a great deal of problem with them. I'd like to thank ACORN again. I know ACORN has been thanked for their presence here, but they are one of the outstanding tenants' rights organizations. We have others in Parkdale. We have the Parkdale Tenants, and I'm going to speak a little bit about them in a moment. We have the West Lodge Tenants' Association. These are phenomenal tenant associations that do the bulk of the work in bringing to heel these absentee and slum landlords.

Right now, I can tell you from my own riding that in the absence of inspectors—because of course there's no funding for them from this government—what we have is the fire department doing de facto inspections. They have become the very expensive inspection unit in the absence of real home and apartment inspections.

But also, of course, this government is a slum landlord. And how are they a slum landlord? Well, Toronto Community Housing Corp. depends on this government for money, and they don't get it.

I'm going to quote from a tenant activist and TCHC resident, Kay Bromfield, who says: "For five years we have been waiting for action to address the \$300-million backlog in outstanding capital repairs."

"We know that the \$127 million for the entire province is insufficient to both create new affordable

housing and rehabilitate existing housing. The Liberals said that they would do things differently, but they are perpetuating the same policy of letting the homes of Ontario's poorest people fall apart. The government takes credit when it invests in new housing, but it lets our existing housing fall further and further into disrepair," said Bromfield.

I want to quote from our member from Scarborough here—Mr. Duguid, parliamentary assistant for housing: He called the repair crisis "a ticking time bomb that would some day blow up."

George Smitherman, the deputy Liberal leader, stayed overnight in a TCHC unit. He urged the previous government to get back into the housing business and preserve our housing stock.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): And we've done it.

Ms. DiNovo: Oh, of course—with \$127 million instead of the \$300 million, just for repairs. And, by the way, might I remind this House that the \$392 million that was spoken about in the budget is federal money? Federal money, fought for by the New Democratic Party at the federal level and given to this province, that it sits on and does not spend.

Just on with that, here's what the tenants say for TCHC:

Question: "Why are there so many unaddressed capital repairs?"

Answer: "The province downloaded the responsibility for community housing to the city but refused to fund capital reserves, despite the fact that many government officials, including Liberals, said they should." So that's the answer there.

There's a wonderful program, by the way, in Parkdale—High Park. It's called the Lord of the Slums tour. Every year they do this; last year they did it. At the height of the Lord of the Slums tour, they present what is called the Golden Cockroach award for worst landlord. I just want to say, as a form of kudos to this phenomenal organization and to the members of ACORN here, a little bit about the Golden Cockroach award

"The Golden Cockroach is a tastefully decorated trophy much coveted by slum landlords and art exhibits.

"The stainless steel curves sweeping upwards towards the sky symbolize the ever-increasing rents which know no limit and the efforts by slumlords to charge sky-high rents.

"Finally, at its pinnacle, there is the Golden Cockroach itself, clad in all its gold and splendour, thus subtly denoting the filth and health hazards which these landlords aspire to create for their tenants. The gold also symbolizes the huge profits which slum landlords are making at the expense of their tenants.

"After painstaking research and exhaustive canvassing by the Parkdale Tenants Association in many Parkdale buildings, we are very disturbed at what we have seen. Families with children are forced to live with cockroaches, mice, broken appliances, no hot water, holes in the ceiling—it goes on. Rents have gone out of

the control and maintenance seems nonexistent. This is inexcusable."

Inexcusable it is indeed, and it does go on.

1130

We're talking, again, about the poorest among us. We could also speak—although I want to leave some more time for my colleague Mr. Ferreira to speak more about this wonderful initiative and this resolution to talk about the environmental impact of some of these buildings as well. You know, many of the tenants pay their own utilities and yet there is absolutely no incentive, and this government has given them none, for landlords to retrofit those apartments. Those tenants are using appliances that are out of date, they're energy-inefficient.

Mr. Ferreira: If they work at all.

Ms. DiNovo: Many of them are heating their homes with baseboard electric heating. Again, this government says it's concerned about the environment. Why is it not concerned about the environment of our poorest tenants? Why is it not doing anything to set up something to retrofit some of these buildings that are in such bad disrepair in an environmental sense?

Finally, of course, I absolutely and wholeheartedly support this resolution and wish that this government actually had the courage to enact it. But sadly, just as in the housing portfolio, what we heard were grand words when they were on this side of the aisle and now we see grand inaction when they're on that side.

Mr. Duguid: I want to begin by commending the member for York South—Weston for bringing forward this resolution. I think any resolution that gives us an opportunity to talk about tenants and the needs of tenants and how we've worked very hard to address the needs of tenants is something that we certainly welcome.

His intentions with this resolution are good. I don't say this to be condescending in any way or to be negative in any way. I won't be able to support this resolution. I will be speaking in opposition to it because we've already given municipalities the powers, under the new City of Toronto Act and the new Municipal Act, to license landlords. This is something that municipalities and, in particular, the member's own city of Toronto asked us to do as we were undergoing discussions about what should be in the new City of Toronto Act and the new Municipal Act. Municipalities wanted these powers because they wanted to utilize the revenues they could get from licensing landlords to invest in more inspectors to get to the very problems that the members here today have brought forward as concerns, concerns that members on all sides of the House certainly share.

But to give them those powers last year—and I know the member wasn't here during that time so he may not be familiar with the new City of Toronto Act or the Municipal Act changes because he wasn't here. I don't hold anything against him for that, but his colleagues, I would have hoped, would have brought him up to speed on this.

The new City of Toronto Act and the new Municipal Act give the cities these powers. The cities asked for

these powers. Does he really think that it would be appropriate for us to say, "Okay, municipalities, here are some new powers for you to go out, if you want to, license landlords, get some revenues from that to invest in building inspectors and apartment inspectors," and just as they get those powers, just as they're undergoing a process now in the city of Toronto to consult with tenants as to how best to implement this idea, just as they're getting poised to act on it, we all of a sudden say, "Forget it. We're going to step in and we're going to take over those powers. We're going to do that instead. We're going to take those revenues from landlords, and we'll do whatever we want with them in a way to try to improve"—the intentions are good, in a way—"housing and the conditions of housing for tenants"? But you can't do that to municipalities. You can't give them powers on one hand and then come in and just take them away a year later.

Mr. Ferreira: Show us the money.

Mr. Duguid: He's asking us to say, "Show us the money." These new powers give municipalities the ability to license to get the money. What the NDP are suggesting with this motion is to not give municipalities access to that, that the province steps in and takes it instead.

The days of Queen's Park dictating to the municipalities are over. We have confidence in the ability and the creativity of municipalities to deal with these things. The city of Toronto is well on the way to dealing with this. The member, as a resident from the city of Toronto, should have known it, should have talked to them, because I can tell you, if we passed this motion I would be getting a phone call in my office, probably within minutes, saying, "What the heck are you guys doing? You've just given us powers and now you're going to take them away?" It doesn't make sense.

I want to comment on something that the member for Parkdale-High Park said. She insists in this private members' business to get partisan with these things, so I've got to respond to it.

To suggest for a second that this government is not building affordable housing is absolutely false. Some 6,700 units across this province are now in construction, occupied or in planning—6,700 units. You know what? That's three and a half times more units than the NDP built in five years, and we've done it in three and a half years. That program will build 15,000 units ultimately, with 5,000 housing allowances. In addition, with this budget that we've just passed, we will get up to 35,000 housing units for tenants who are looking to try to get into some of those vacant units across the province. Some 35,000 families across this province are going to get units because of the hard work of this government, because of the budget that has just come out. That's progress.

Do we still have more to do? You're darned right we do. Are we going to do it? You're darned right we are, because we care about tenants, we care about the vulnerable in our society and we're acting on it more than the

NDP ever did when they were in office and certainly more than the Tories ever did.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to one of the new members of the Legislature, from York South-Weston, and congratulate him on his election, his campaign and entering the Legislature.

The motion here today calls on the government of Ontario "to move expeditiously to establish and implement a comprehensive landlord licensing program, to ensure minimum standards for rental accommodation throughout Ontario." There has been some very vigorous debate in the Legislature on the history of the parties and what they've done on affordable housing, which is certainly a problem, and to protect our tenants. We are all here, of course, to try to protect the tenants as best we can, and there are certainly some different ideas of how to accomplish that.

Interjection.

Ms. Scott: Yes, we could always have more new units in the riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. Thank you very much. The member from Peterborough is commenting.

I'd like to add some thoughts with respect to the landlord licensing program proposed in the resolution before us. When I consider the many comments, letters and e-mails I receive from the hardworking residents of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, one of the most common themes is the cost of property ownership. I have to agree with the member from Oxford: I've never had any calls since I've been in about comprehensive landlord licensing programs.

There are many costs included in property ownership, such as the mortgage principal, interest, maintenance, repairs, electricity, heat, property taxes. We've certainly heard all those serious issues surrounding the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. and the skyrocketing prices and assessments involved in that. So adding yet another fee on top of the costs that are already incurred by a lot of landlords and property investors and that they are already on the hook for—mandating licensing, mandating repairs and mandating inspections on top of the already high level of regulatory responsibilities which landlords face is something I'm quite leery about because of the end result to those tenants and what they will have to pay.

Let's not forget that landlords and investors in rental housing are providing Ontario residents with a place to live. On top of that, the landlord licensing scheme is going to require administration and management. So establishing another layer of bureaucracy to implement a program that can, for the most part, be handled by the existing avenues such as the Landlord and Tenant Act as well as local municipal regulations, is not something I'm comfortable with and I don't think will achieve the end result that the member from York South-Weston wants to accomplish. We don't want to see landlords and investors being used as some sort of cash cow to feed an added administration. I can assure you, based on the

property owners and investors in rental housing in my riding, those who make their livelihood in property investment and management, they don't want that to be based on a licence that has the potential to arbitrarily shut down any or all of this income due to regulatory burdens. They don't want to be shut down.

1140

I know the member for York South–Weston's intentions are honourable with respect to this resolution. I fully agree that the safety and security of our residents is paramount. There are definitely cases where the quality and safety of residents hasn't been given the proper consideration by a landlord, and those landlords should be dealt with. That should not occur.

That leads me to my next point. A landlord licensing program such as proposed in this resolution potentially would have inspections and follow-up inspections for non-compliant landlords who are not living up to their expectations. The problem is that landlords who are doing their best to manage and maintain their properties are going to be charged the same licensing fees as those who don't. So throwing the bad eggs in with the good is not an incentive program that I can support.

Finally, as I think my colleague from Oxford has already stated, landlord licences and related inspection and administrative costs are going to be passed on to tenants so investors can protect and maintain their return on investment or management of losses. We're fooling ourselves if we think otherwise. Regulating the rental market will impact the level of rents, the quality of rentals and the willingness of landlords to invest in the market. So that's going to add to an already existing crisis that we see the Dalton McGuinty government has failed to address on affordable housing in this province.

There has been a little bit of mention of affordable housing in the Legislature this morning and the promise that the Dalton McGuinty government made of 20,000 units of affordable housing. As of March 1, we can say that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing lists 7,407 units towards that target—their own ministry—although the Liberals have included over 4,000 in that number that are only in the planning stage or under construction. The member for Parkdale–High Park says that in reality, in the FOI, there are only 285 units. So, good for her on those questions. Saying anything to get elected and not coming through with the end product is not what we as Ontarians want to see.

I commend the member for York South–Weston for his intention with this resolution this morning but feel there are better avenues to protect tenants.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Ferreira: I'm glad to rise to rebut some of the comments and remarks made by some of my colleagues on both sides of the House. First of all, to the members for Oxford and Haliburton–Victoria–Brock from the official opposition, I thank them for their interjections but I want to respond to a couple of their critiques. First of all, the licensing would be compulsory. It would be mandatory. So you wouldn't have an increase or a pre-

valence of underground housing, as I believe the member for Oxford referred to, because licensing under this scheme would have to take place. Unless you can somehow hide a rental building with 10 or more units under a rock somewhere, which perhaps happens in Woodstock, I don't think we would see that underground housing mushroom and grow the way he fears.

He and his colleague talked about passing those fees on to these poor tenants and how the tenants would be whacked with increased fees every month or every year. I want to just quote some figures here. In terms of the schemes that presently exist, we are talking about fees per unit per year ranging between \$20 and \$50. I'll do a little bit of math on that. That works out to anywhere from \$2 to \$4 per month. When I speak to tenants across the city of Toronto and elsewhere in this province and tell them that an investment of \$2 or \$4 per month on your rent, if it does get passed down, means that you are going to live in a clean, safe, decent, well-repaired, well-maintained place, they say to me, "Paul, that sounds like an insurance policy to me, and I would gladly sign on to pay that extra \$2 or \$4 or \$5 as the case may be." Those are the kind of dollars that we're talking about. So these fears of trickling down costs to unsuspecting tenants are false and phony arguments.

My colleague who sits beside me here, the member for Parkdale–High Park, who has certainly made quite an impression on this House in her short time here—I very much look forward to being as effective as she has been in raising the issues that matter to Ontarians—mentioned the sorry record of this government when it comes to housing issues, and she's bang on. Their record is absolutely sorry.

I'm sorry that the—well, the member for Scarborough Centre rose to speak and he—

Mr. Kormos: "Sorry" doesn't cut it.

Mr. Ferreira: No, it doesn't. He argued that indeed they've done a lot. In fact, the record shows otherwise. During the three and a half years under this government, eviction attempts have skyrocketed in this province. More and more tenants are facing eviction because of the lax, slanted rules that this government has perpetuated over the past three and a half years. And when the member from Scarborough Centre was asked about these alarming stats, his answer was, and I quote, "We're continuing to monitor that closely." This speaks to the heart of the matter with this government. They monitor. They sit back, they watch and they monitor. Well, the people of Ontario want action. They want action not just on housing issues; they want action on many other issues. But as we've seen during question period this week, there's lots of monitoring and sitting back and watching but very little action, and the unfortunate part is that those who suffer the most are the most vulnerable residents of the province of Ontario.

I dare say, based on the actions and the words and the indication that these members from the government here this morning are prepared to vote against this motion, that perhaps we can borrow that Golden Cockroach

Award and present it to this government here in this House as a symbol of their neglect—their wanton neglect—of housing in this province. They have short-changed tenants. They promise us the moon, but at the end of the day the delivery is weak, is poor, and for that they're going to get a failing grade in October, I dare suggest.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to speak on the motion this morning from the member from York South–Weston, and I certainly want to congratulate him on his election in the recent by-election. He follows a distinguished number of people that have represented that riding: Mr. Cordiano, Mr. Kennedy, Mr. Rae and of course one of the most distinguished parliamentarians that ever served in this place, the honourable Donald C. MacDonald, who had a very long career. In fact, for those who are interested in history, it was Mr. MacDonald, in the mid-1960s of course, who led the attack when the then Attorney General of the day, Fred Cass, had brought forward the legislation—it was during the era when they were talking about organized crime in Ontario and they were going to arrest people without the opportunity to have legal representation. There were three people that essentially led the charge that time: Mr. MacDonald and two rebels who were on the Tory back benches, Alan Eagleson and Allan Lawrence. Of course, those two gentleman went on to a certain degree of notoriety in their respective careers during that time when that legislation was debated. So I just wanted to digress this morning and welcome the member here.

I can't talk about the specifics of Toronto but I can talk about my hometown, the city of Peterborough. Over my municipal career, we've always had a very effective standards and enforcement agency. It was under the leadership of Jeff Chalmers, Bob Waldron and Dean Findlay. What we did was that we constantly reviewed our property standards act in the city of Peterborough to make sure that it was updated. We gave the powers to those inspectors at the municipal level who could respond to complaints that tenants would bring forward about conditions in rental properties in the city of Peterborough. And it works very effectively for inspectors to go in to identify those problems and to work with landlords to make the necessary adjustments. It continues to work extremely well. For most municipalities across the province of Ontario, that is their experience with very effective property standards legislation that always needs to be updated consistently to make sure it reflects the kind of problems that landlords and tenants may have. What we developed the new Residential Tenancies Act of 2006, there were at least 10 consultation round tables across the province of Ontario, and there are at least four provisions in that act for better maintaining buildings. The new legislation directly addresses poor maintenance by increasing the remedies and compensation available to tenants whose landlords fail to maintain their properties. There will also be an incentive for landlords to conduct regular repairs and maintenance.

1150

If a building has serious maintenance issues or serious outstanding work orders, the following new remedies are available to tenants: (1) A tenant can apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to stop all rent increases, including annual rent increases and above-guideline increases, until all serious maintenance issues are resolved; (2) if there are serious outstanding work orders or serious maintenance issues, the board may refuse some or all of an above-guideline increase application until these issues have been resolved; and (3) in special circumstances, the board member may allow tenants to pay some or all of the rent to the board, instead of to the landlord, until the serious maintenance issues are resolved.

The RTA also includes new rules that ensure all tenants pay some or all of the rent. Landlords can inspect their rental units for maintenance problems after providing a tenant with 24 hours' written notice to do so. This could allow landlords to prevent serious maintenance issues from developing further.

Maximum penalties for offences that are committed under the RTA have also been doubled, from \$10,000 to \$25,000 for individuals and from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for corporations.

The Residential Tenancies Act of 2006 has certainly provided some new provisions for tenants to make sure that those landowners—from my perspective, it's a minimum to make sure these landlords are forced to make repairs and improve their maintenance levels in rental accommodation across the province of Ontario.

Talking about investment, just the other day I had the pleasure to announce \$4 million that will be going to the Peterborough Housing Authority under the great leadership of Darlene Cook for new housing or to spend money to rehabilitate existing housing that needs some repairs. In fact, during the course of this government, we got over 250 new units of housing in Peterborough, two great projects: the River Ridge project that was developed after the flood that hit Peterborough, July 15, 2004, and the Woollen Mill project that just came on stream a short time ago.

I appreciate the member from York South–Weston bringing this motion forward this morning, but it will not have my support.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member from York South–Weston for this interesting and well-intentioned bill, and also on his election to this House. At the same time, welcome to members of ACORN, a tenant advocacy group, who are here today to watch these proceedings.

I might say at the outset to all of the viewers today that this is private members' hour, which means that normally party discipline does not apply and we can vote with our conscience. I will therefore be supporting this private member's bill.

Applause.

Mr. Ruprecht: Thank you.

But there are some concerns, and I hope you will address them. For instance, the member from Scar-

borough Centre raised some interesting points, and I hope the member from York South–Weston will address them in his final two minutes. Here we are giving the city of Toronto—in this case, we're from Toronto—extra, additional powers to regulate that industry.

Having said that, the reason I'm supporting this specific member's resolution is because any time we can do something to improve the problems with absentee landlords, that should be supported. At least I want to remind the member—that it gets on the table and gets to a discussion is important. That is why I'm supporting this legislation. But I'm reminding him at the same time that he has to answer, or he should consider answering, some of the questions that are being asked of him today in a fair manner.

I represented, as you know, the riding of Parkdale before, and I've seen the horrors first-hand, the worst buildings, the West Lodge buildings that my friend from Parkdale–High Park mentioned earlier. While we will be campaigning this year, there is no doubt we will be running into these kinds of buildings that necessarily need some help.

The government, as you know—and I think you've been a bit unfair in criticizing it too much—has already instituted some ways to help tenants in terms of repairs and in terms of absentee landlords. But before I get to that, I just want to remind you to answer the question of our colleague from Scarborough Centre, and that is, we're providing the city of Toronto with extra powers in terms of licensing and in terms of acting on this issue. You didn't address that yet. You did not answer how we should proceed with that power.

My friend from Peterborough indicated that we did pass the Municipal Act, 2001, and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006. I would only hope that you will also tell us, if you can, to be fair, why it would be that the NDP would oppose that legislation that was passed, which gives more powers to the tenants in terms of overcoming some of the repair and maintenance problems. My colleague indicated that the tenant now can apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to stop all rent increases, including annual rent increases. If there are outstanding work orders or serious maintenance issues, the board may refuse them as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Ruprecht: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that the member will be able to answer some of these questions.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ferreira, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ferreira: I'm glad to hear that the member opposite from Davenport has expressed his support for the resolution today. I'm certainly heartened and encouraged by that. I want to thank him for his comments, and also his colleague from Peterborough for his interjection during this most recent round.

It's one thing to give municipalities—and the city of Toronto specifically—powers, but it's quite another to give them the cash, to give them the money, to give them

the funds to actually exercise those powers. That's where this government, quite frankly, has been deficient. They haven't delivered those monies. That's why, in my city of Toronto today—in fact, this very day—there are consultations happening down at Toronto city hall to talk about the budget that the city put forward earlier this week that is showing a substantial deficit that will be borne by the taxpayers and the residents of Toronto. That's where, I say to the member from Davenport, this government has not delivered.

The members from the government side talk grandly about what they have done over the past three and a half years, but the fact is that tenants today are no better off than they were in 2003. Again, eviction attempts are at the highest they've ever been in this province. In fact, tenants are facing greater pressure on them from their unscrupulous landlords and from the system itself to try and fend off eviction attempts. That is the record of this government. When the government is asked, "What are you going to do about this?" again, they don't answer. They sit back and they say they will monitor it. This government's record on housing and protecting tenants is atrocious.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

HANDGUN AMMUNITION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We will deal first with ballot item number 73, standing in the name of Mr. Duguid.

Mr. Duguid has moved private member's notice of motion number 49. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

RENTAL ACCOMMODATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 74, standing in the name of Mr. Ferreira.

Mr. Ferreira has moved private member's notice of motion number 52. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1200 to 1205.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please stand until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

DiNovo, Cheri
Ferreira, Paul
Hampton, Howard

Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley

Ruprecht, Tony
Tabuns, Peter

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne
Bakisssoon, Bas
Chan, Michael
Desaney, Bob
Chilton, Vic
Duguid, Brad
Hardeman, Ernie
Lalonde, Jean-Marc

Leal, Jeff
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Mitchell, Carol
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Rinaldi, Lou

Sandals, Liz
Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Wilkinson, John
Wilson, Jim

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 8; the nays are 23.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1207 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MINISTER OF PUBLIC
INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): One of the most important assets of a politician is his reputation. I rise today to correct something the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal said yesterday. He was wrong yesterday, he is wrong today and he will be wrong forever.

The minister yesterday said that in 2002, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. was part of my ministerial responsibility. I told him to check his facts, but he refuses to listen or correct his statement. You would think that a minister responsible for the Ontario lottery corporation, the commercial end of the operation, would understand that when I was the Minister of Consumer and Business Services in 2002, I was responsible for the regulatory end, the body called the Alcohol and Gaming Commission. Those two ministries are purposely set apart because of the conflict in nature of the two roles. The Ombudsman in his report on the lottery scandal specifically states that the Alcohol and Gaming Commission has no oversight over the lottery side of OLG.

Instead of the minister's accepting the responsibility for his personal neglect in this corruption and resigning, he continues to run for cover and try to deflect blame on anyone he can. If he cannot understand the difference between the minister responsible for the regulations and the oversight and the minister responsible for running the lotteries, then he should not be a minister.

JACK MARKS

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): On Saturday, March 3, the family and friends and the people of Toronto said goodbye to former Toronto Chief of Police Jack Marks at a police funeral held in Scarborough's historic St. Andrew's church. Jack Marks

served as chief of the Toronto Police Service from 1984 to 1989. This old-school, no-nonsense cop rose from a constable in 1951 through the ranks to lead the Toronto Police Service through a tumultuous time. His leadership was personified by a staunch commitment to ethics, duty and honour. In the words of OPP Commissioner Julian Fantino, "He was truly the salt of the earth, uncomplicated, genuine and yet profoundly thoughtful and conscientious, especially about all things police."

I had a personal encounter with Jack Marks when I got the honour to drive him home following a police function many years ago. He was passionate about the city of Toronto. He was knowledgeable and committed to policing and community safety, even in his retirement. I recall being amazed at how this strong, tough leader in the field was actually quite open, caring and generous.

Jack Marks has been credited with modernizing the Toronto Police Service, promoting racial harmony and pioneering community policing. It's safe to say that Toronto is a safer city and the Toronto Police Service is a better police service because of the leadership of Jack Marks.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Ontario Legislature from all sides of the House, I express profound condolences to his wife, Joyce, his daughter, Karen, his son John, and his son and my personal friend, Scott, and the entire Marks family.

MINISTER OF PUBLIC
INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): I rise in the House today to enlighten the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal as to what the people of Ontario are saying about his involvement in the lottery scandal. Perhaps the minister doesn't realize just how outraged the people of Ontario are that he is still sitting at the cabinet table and not taking responsibility for his ministry.

I have received e-mails from my constituents and will read from just two. From Mr. Dave Rogers: "In regards to Mr. Caplan, the minister responsible for the Ontario Lottery Corp., I urge you to seek his resignation. He denies involvement in the daily affairs of the organization, but cannot deny responsibility for its actions. If he is not accountable, what good is he in his role, or any other" role, "for that matter?"

"Mr. Caplan is not acting responsibly and in the interests of Ontarians if he does not step down."

From Mr. John Jacobs: "You can let Mr. Tory and the Honourable Mr. Caplan know that I am one of many Ontarians that is outraged by what has happened at the OLG and fully support Mr. Tory's demand for a better explanation of what Mr. Caplan knew. Mr. Brown should have been fired a long time ago, and without the generous severance package."

This is just a sampling of the many e-mails that I have received in my office. It's time for this minister to do the right thing and resign.

AWARDS IN BEACHES—EAST YORK

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): I rise today to talk about two wonderful events that have taken place in my riding in the past week. Both of them involved wonderful women who have made great contributions to our community.

The first, the annual Agnes McPhail Award, is given out to people who live in the former borough of East York every year on March 24, which is Agnes McPhail's birthday, and this year's winner was none other than our own Lorna Krawchuk. Lorna Krawchuk is known to all East Yorkers as a former councillor with the borough of East York. As well as that, she has a long history and tradition of helping people in East York: years of service at St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church, years of service with the Girl Guides of Canada, at the local food bank and with the Leaside Property Owners' Association.

She was a very worthy recipient of the award, which is a monetary one. It amounted to some \$2,600 this year and she gave all of it to the Flemingdon Park food bank, so I commend her for that.

The second awards took place last night at the Beaches. The Beaches Women of Distinction Awards took place at the Balmy Beach Club. Thirty-seven women were honoured in the inaugural award. Perhaps the House would like to know that two of those were former MPPs who represented the riding: Marion Bryden and Frances Lankin.

My congratulations to all of the winners, to the people who put on these two awards and to the volunteers who made it happen.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's my pleasure to rise today on behalf of my colleague the MPP for Brant, Dave Levac, to welcome representatives from Parkinson Society Canada who are at Queen's Park today helping to raise awareness for the need for an increased understanding of this terrible disease and the need to push for a cure and a better quality of life for those affected.

Parkinson's is a debilitating disease that often strikes people during their most productive years, when they are raising a family, building their career, caring for aging parents or making a significant contribution to society.

Over 40,000 Ontarians are currently living with Parkinson's. One such person is Dave's own brother, Norm Levac, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's when he was just 45 years old. Norm fights bravely as this disease slowly steals his physical being. But, as one of the few lucky people in the province, Norm underwent DBS surgery, which has helped him maintain a better quality of life while he fights the disease. DBS, or deep brain stimulation, involves electrodes being implanted into the brain. These are connected to a small electrical device called a pulse generator that can be externally programmed. DBS can greatly reduce the reliance on

drugs, and involuntary tremors. Movement disorder specialists also greatly improve the quality of life for those living with Parkinson's. Much progress has been made, but more work needs to be done.

I would like to acknowledge Carolyn Conners, David Lipson and Joyce Gordon, among many others, at Parkinson Society Canada for their tireless dedication to this important cause, and to welcome them to Queen's Park.

MINISTER OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo—Wellington): Listening to the McGuinty Liberal government's weak defence of their actions in the lottery scandal, people are again questioning whether or not they can believe what they're hearing.

The average person buying a lottery ticket knows that the odds of winning are long, but implicitly believes in the integrity of the game. Who on earth would buy a ticket if they believed they were going to be cheated out of a potential win? No one.

This is yet another example of the government's problems today, because as the Ombudsman's report points out, the province of Ontario has become addicted to gambling revenues, and now Dalton McGuinty is nervous that this scandal is going to cut into his government's bottom line.

Another question follows: How many people in Ontario, like Bob Edmonds, have bought lottery tickets in good faith and have been cheated out of their winnings? The Ombudsman estimates that millions of dollars have been paid out in dishonest claims. That would mean thousands of Ontarians have been robbed of money that was rightfully theirs. No wonder Dalton McGuinty is afraid that people are going to stop buying lottery tickets.

I have been concerned for a long time that gambling in Ontario is out of control and we are not doing enough to help people with gambling addictions. That's why I introduced a private member's bill calling for a public inquiry into the social impact of gambling in Ontario almost three years ago. Yesterday, I heard the minister responsible for lotteries, still in office at the moment, hanging on by the skin of his teeth, say that he's given all his files over to the OPP. Surely this means that the activities of his office are being investigated by the police, and, as such, he must resign.

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ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): This morning, I was pleased to welcome the Minister of Community and Social Services and her parliamentary assistant, the member from London North Centre, to my riding to discuss with community representatives some of the measures in the recent budget to fight poverty.

I'm extremely proud of our government's push to build opportunities for all Ontarians to succeed. Through measures like the Ontario child benefit, we are making a significant investment in children from low-income families. We're giving them a chance to fulfill their potential, a chance at a brighter future. The OCB is a \$2.1-billion program that will benefit nearly 1.3 million children annually. In addition, Ontario Works and ODSP rates are being increased by \$83 million to provide benefits to more than 420,000 families with more than 196,000 children.

The budget also contained good news for many community organizations in my area, including \$1 million for the Catholic Family Counselling Centre's capital campaign—this organization has shown leadership in developing an internationally recognized program to end family violence—\$350,000 for Christian Horizons to provide services for individuals with developmental disabilities, and \$250,000 to Reaching Our Outdoor Friends, or ROOF, a local group working with homeless and at-risk youth to help rebuild their community centre, which was tragically lost in a fire.

I'd like to thank the minister, the member for London North Centre, and the important community groups who came to the meeting this morning for all their work on behalf of the poor and disadvantaged in Waterloo region.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I rise in the House today to talk about the Premier's visit to my riding of Peterborough and the incredible \$1.3-million investment that the McGuinty government has made to the Five Counties Children's Centre to help improve services for children and youth with special needs. Children make up about 20% of the population but they are 100% of our future, and I'm incredibly grateful for the Five Counties Children's Centre. It is here to give a great start in life to those many children.

The McGuinty government is dedicated to creating more opportunities for Ontario's children and their families and giving them access to the resources that will provide a better quality of life. The most recent budget includes an extra \$30 million for services to children with special needs, alongside an additional \$4 million to support all children's treatment centres. This is on top of the \$10 million that already exists from the 2006 budget to provide services to almost 5,000 children and youth with special needs across this great province.

Diane Pick, CEO of the Five Counties Children's Centre, says of the McGuinty government's investment: "Five Counties Children's Centre appreciates that the government values the importance of accessible treatment space for our families and a quality work environment for our staff."

The McGuinty Liberals are committed to making Ontario stronger through increased access to opportunities. With this investment, we're doing just that, and the people of Peterborough are incredibly grateful for this new investment in our kids.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I'd like to take a moment to share with my constituents of Perth-Middlesex and all Ontarians what this year's provincial budget will do for them.

This budget is part of our plan to make improvements in their lives. We want to be there for the families and the seniors who rely on properly functioning hospitals. We want to be there for children and parents who expect and deserve smaller classes, more teachers, and schools that aren't crumbling. We want an infrastructure suited to the 21st-century economy, with research and innovation that will create and sustain jobs well into the future. We have a plan and a vision for Ontario that will create prosperity and opportunity for all.

Rather than cut the cord on our most vulnerable, as the Tories did, we have chosen to provide additional programs and funding to parents. A single parent with two children will now have an additional \$4,515 in their pocket compared to 2003.

Businesses back home in my riding have told me how happy they are that the government is creating fairness in the business education tax by implementing a new tax ceiling. This will mean an average tax reduction for Stratford area businesses of 35%, making them far more competitive.

Don't take our word for it. Even the leader of the official opposition, Mr. Tory himself, said that there isn't a thing he would reverse. He said, "I can't think of one thing I would reverse."

He talks a good game, but leadership requires vision, and a good vision for Ontario is what our Premier has delivered with this budget. My constituents will watch closely the budget votes and see whether or not he supports all of our wonderful initiatives in my riding.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to welcome Joanne and Paul Taylor of Oshawa, who are seated in the gallery today: co-founders of the Black Ribbon campaign, which is a cause that, while underscoring the importance of mental health programs, also seeks to dispel the stigma and dark cloud associated with mental illness. In recognition of the importance of this initiative, I seek unanimous consent for all members of this Legislature to wear the black ribbons provided in their respective lobbies.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Unanimous consent has been asked to wear the black ribbon. Agreed? Agreed.

VISITORS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to acknowledge an itinerant teacher with the Toronto District School Board, Kelly Pollack, in the gallery, and to thank her for all the work she does with our blind students in the city.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to welcome Mr. Ryan Tripp from my hometown of Bracebridge, who is down here today with the Parkinson Society. He's sitting in the east members' gallery and has been here holding meetings with the Parkinson Society today.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: If I can recognize my younger brother's attendance in the House—Gerardo Racco.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I hope that all members might join with me in welcoming the other visitors from the Parkinson Society, along with Mr. Tripp: Cathy Graham; Joyce Gordon, the CEO; and Dr. Hardacre.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 69, An Act to allow for information sharing about regulated organizations to improve efficiency in the administration and enforcement of regulatory legislation and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 69, Loi permettant l'échange de renseignements sur les organismes réglementés afin de rendre plus efficaces l'application et l'exécution de la législation de nature réglementaire et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The Speaker: Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (REPLACEMENT WORKERS), 2007 LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS)

Mr. Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 192, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 / *Projet de loi 192, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The purpose of this bill is to restore the provisions that were incorporated into the Labour Relations Act by the Labour Relations and Employment Statute Law Amendment Act, 1992, and subsequently repealed by the Labour Relations Act, 1995. The purpose of the provisions being restored is to prevent an employer from replacing striking or locked-out employees with scabs. The bill allows replacement workers to be used in emergencies.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP), 2007 LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT (GÉRANCE DES PRODUITS)

Mr. Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 193, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act with respect to the stewardship of products and of the packages or containers used for products / *Projet de loi 193, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui a trait à la gérance des produits et des emballages ou des contenants utilisés pour ceux-ci.*

1350

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): The bill amends the Environmental Protection Act to add to the powers of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations under the act. The bill adds powers to make regulations on the stewardship of products, packages and containers, an area known as product stewardship. Regulations can require that the packages or containers used for certain products that are offered for sale or sold in Ontario be capable of being recycled or reused and can require that manufacturers and other persons establish and operate depots to accept the return of those packages and containers when empty.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot items 77 and 78 be waived.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a parliamentary delegation from the Republic of Chile, led by Mr. Carlos Cantero Ojeda, a senator. Accompanying the delegation is Mr. Ricardo Plaze Duco, Consul General of Chile in Toronto. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests.

Applause.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Today marks a historic occasion in the transformation of Ontario's health care system.

This coming Sunday, Ontario's 14 local health integration networks, or LHINs, will assume their full authority for funding health services in their respective parts of Ontario.

One year ago, the Lieutenant Governor granted royal assent to groundbreaking legislation which established LHINs. Since then, LHINs have started to make their presence felt.

They've engaged over 40,000 Ontarians in a new conversation about improved health care delivery in their local communities. Such local input into health care planning is vital.

We call Ontario diverse, yet we have often failed to recognize that what's effective and practical for patients in one area of our great province may not work the same in another. That's why local integration health networks, as part of their broad engagement with their communities, have also put in place plans that reflect the needs of specific ethnocultural communities that make up our province. They heard from residents that health care providers must take into account special dietary needs of patients, for example, in the Muslim-Canadian community, and observe certain customs and cultural etiquette.

By taking away some of the planning authority which currently rests at Queen's Park and shifting it to local networks closer to real people, closer to patients, we are working to ensure that resources and services will be better matched to patients' health care needs than they have ever been.

The 14 local health integration networks are also aligned with 14 community care access centres, down from 42, to ensure the most efficient delivery of care and

services throughout the community. This alignment will also provide better standardization of client services and allow community care access centres more flexibility to plan and distribute resources equitably throughout the LHIN area.

Beyond CCACs, LHINs have worked hard to break down existing barriers and bring local health providers together to tackle common problems in partnership.

When I introduced the LHIN legislation, I lamented that when I looked around the province in search of the oft-referred-to health system, I was often sorely disappointed, for there was little evidence of a true system. Instead, and unfortunately for the people of Ontario, health care delivery seemed to be all too often compromised by fragmentation and turf protection. LHINs have already started to change this.

The central local health integration network, for example, has had a leadership role in the design of an innovative delivery model for hip and knee surgeries at North York's Branson site. This is a collaborative effort with staff from Markham Stouffville Hospital and York Central Hospital. The project involves a specially trained team of interdisciplinary staff working with orthopaedic surgeons. They assess and manage patients requiring hip and knee joint assessment. This assessment enables the surgeons to focus on the patients most likely to require surgery and increases the time they can spend in the operating room with those who are most in need. This means most patients will get access to faster joint replacement surgery. A patient's care journey, from the first visit to the family doc through to the eventual surgery, is simplified. Patients are empowered and given choice about what care they receive and where. Throughout the province, similar models are starting to come to life, and all have one thing in common: the driving involvement of the local health integration network to deliver better results for Ontario's patients.

This Sunday, local health integration networks enter the next phase of their development, assuming the direct responsibility for funding almost \$20 billion in health care services. LHINs will oversee almost two thirds of the overall health budget, determining when, where and how that money will best be spent to deliver the best local results. With the great power associated with exercising their spending authority comes great responsibility for the LHINs to deliver on their mission of providing results for Ontario's patients.

Over the next few years, Ontarians can expect to see real improvement in the health care they are receiving. They will benefit from different health care providers working together to care for them—fewer delays and disruptions and shorter wait times in their health care services. They will receive better, safer care from the health professionals who are best suited to provide that care. They will receive better information about health services in their community and have the ability to compare their wait times with those in other local health integration networks. And finally, they will experience a health system that works better because there is less waste and duplication.

The contrast between local health integration networks and the old district health councils could not be more explicit. DHCs had no power to translate their extensive and costly planning work into concrete action. They had no ability to actually use what they heard from people on the ground and use it to improve local health services. And finally, district health councils had neither capacity nor responsibility to deliver quantifiable results that benefited patients. LHINs, on the other hand, are signing on through accountability agreements to meet specific performance targets related to improved health outcomes in their communities. By having the LHINs take over on the ground planning and implementation, the ministry is free to rise up to a more strategic level and do what it is designed to do: provide stewardship to the system through setting provincial standards and priorities and monitoring health outcomes.

Let no one mistake this system transformation for an exercise in shirking of responsibility at the government level. The buck stops here, and it will continue to do so as LHINs take on their new powers. Ontario's health care system must become more centred around the patient. On April 1, we will be taking another big step in building the system that we need on behalf of our patients, and I want to thank all of those front-line health care providers who do such great work on behalf of our patients.

DEFIBRILLATION EQUIPMENT

DÉFIBRILLATEURS CARDIAQUES

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): This morning I had the true pleasure of being at an event with my colleague the member for Don Valley West, the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, the Minister of Education, in her riding where we announced the single largest government investment in Canadian history for public-access defibrillators at the Jenner Jean-Marie Community Centre. The McGuinty government is providing \$3 million to the Heart and Stroke Foundation to place 1,000 automatic external defibrillators, or AEDs, in communities across Ontario, primarily in community centres, recreation complexes, arenas and the like.

Les maladies cardiaques demeurent parmi les principales causes de décès en Ontario et, chaque année, plus de 6 500 personnes meurent à la suite d'un épisode d'arrêt cardiaque subit.

1400

Even though more than 40% of us will develop heart disease in our lifetime, 80% of coronary heart disease can be avoided by making healthy food choices, being active every day, avoiding excessive alcohol, being smoke-free and having blood pressure levels checked on a regular basis.

Although eating healthy and being active can reduce the risks associated with heart disease, some people are not even aware of their predisposition to sudden cardiac arrest. We know that sudden cardiac arrest does not have to be fatal or result in disability.

Nous le savons car les preuves montrent que l'intervention précoce par un personnel formé utilisant des défibrillateurs automatiques peut sauver des vies.

Access to defibrillators in buildings where members of our communities learn, work and play can reduce the number of deaths in our province and better protect people's health. Providing public access to defibrillators can make a difference between life and death. As health promotion minister, my goal is to improve and strengthen public health by ensuring that Ontarians have the tools and training necessary in their physical environments to achieve and maintain good health.

I'd like to recognize two people who were with us this morning at the ceremony in Kathleen Wynne's riding. They're both alive today because of automated external defibrillators. I know they will be joining us a little later in the gallery.

On November 21, 2005, Detroit Red Wings defence-man Jiri Fischer returned to the team bench after a shift and collapsed. As doctors and emergency attendants worked feverishly, Fischer's teammates and opponents, the fans in the Joe Louis Arena and a television audience of millions watched in stunned silence. Quite simply, Fischer's heart stopped. Thanks to an automatic defibrillator, Jiri Fischer is alive and living the best life he can.

We want to thank Jiri for coming here in a few moments. We also thank him for being at the event today. As I was telling Kathleen Wynne, when you have a hockey player—and we were also joined by Walter Gretzky, who's a great ambassador for heart and stroke. All of the attention was on the hockey players and the politicians were forgotten, as it should be in Canada as we head to the playoff season.

Also at this morning's event was Sam Webster. Sam was in the midst of playing a racquetball game when he collapsed. A Mikey defibrillator saved his life. We thank them both for sharing their emotional stories with us today.

I'm pleased to say that the McGuinty government is working with one of our key heart health partners, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, to save more lives throughout the province of Ontario.

I want to welcome Rocco Rossi, who is the president of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. He's in the gallery, along with his colleague Justin Brown. We thank them very much for their leadership in this important issue.

I'd also like to recognize a special guest in the House, Mr. Hugh Heron, who is right up there. Hugh Heron is the president of Heathwood Homes and co-founder of the Mikey Network. The Mikey Network is a community-based organization that raises money for public-access defibrillators. Earlier this month, I was pleased to join Hugh, who's a great community leader not just in the business community but he's also taken on this cause because a good friend of his passed away as a result of cardiac arrest. He's keeping his spirit and his memory alive through placing these defibrillators in schools in the Toronto area and other public-access facilities. Hugh, thank you very much for a job well done.

As I mentioned, these units are called Mikeys in honour of Mike Salem, a respected member of the home building community who passed away from sudden cardiac arrest in 2002.

Je suis heureux d'annoncer que, par l'entremise de la Fondation des maladies du cœur de l'Ontario, notre gouvernement investit 3 \$ millions pour garder les Ontariennes et les Ontariens en bonne santé et pour sauver des vies.

The funding announcement is in addition to the Ministry of Health Promotion's investment of \$3.4 million a year in initiatives designed to promote heart health across Ontario through the Ontario heart health program. This program is a community partnership that focuses on risk factors for cardiovascular and other chronic diseases and is making a difference in the lives of people in our province. We're taking steps to improve the heart health of Ontarians young and old.

I'd also like to recognize the efforts of my colleague Minister Gerry Phillips, the Minister of Government Services, who is fulfilling the government's commitment to install 250 life-saving portable heart defibrillators in close to 100 provincial government buildings in our province.

I'd also like to acknowledge my colleague Bruce Crozier, MPP for Essex, who has led the way in this Legislature to remove any doubt about liability when it comes to AEDs. Without his efforts, this day may not have been possible. His legislation, the Chase McEachern Act, has now been incorporated into Minister Smitherman's Bill 171. This act is named in honour of a brave young boy, Chase McEachern, who passed away at the age of 11 as the result of cardiac arrest. I had the true honour—I know Kathleen Wynne shares this with me—a very emotional speech by his father, John McEachern, talking about how he is taking this terrible tragedy that has affected his family personally and making a good of it as a result of the work that Bruce Crozier and others of the Mikey Network and Heart and Stroke have done.

In conclusion, I'm proud to be part of Premier McGuinty's government, a government that recognizes the importance of partnering with the community, with the private sector and other levels of government. This \$3-million investment today, while significant in size, more importantly is significant in that it will save lives in this province. That alone is something that makes me extremely proud to be the Minister of Health Promotion in this great province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to respond to this. I'm pleased that the minister recognized Chase McEachern, a young 11-year-old hockey player from Barrie, Ontario, who in February 2006 passed away at his school. One of his last wishes, when he wrote to Don Cherry, was to seek a defibrillator program through the province and through the Heart and Stroke Foundation because of the cause he believed in. I have worked with his father at many fundraisers to raise money to bring awareness. I've been with Minister Phillips in Barrie in terms of raising awareness with

respect to defibrillator use. In honour of Chase McEachern in Bill 171—and I supported Mr. Crozier in terms of his bill and bringing that forth to the House—it would be nice to see the government allocate some of that \$3 million towards the Chase McEachern Foundation and to the Heart and Stroke Foundation to encourage and raise awareness of defibrillator use in this province. The memory of Chase McEachern is in this House. It's something that would be a worthy cause throughout this province for what he did to bring this issue to the fore.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I would like to respond to the statement that was made regarding LHINs. Our party does support the need for integration of the health system. However, having said that, by the LHINs' own admission, they are not able to do anything to address the doctor shortage. Even the LHINs know this. In fact, Georgina Thompson, the chairwoman of the South East Local Health Integration Network, headquartered in Belleville, said, "The new organization promising to improve health care in Ontario says doctor recruitment is not on its agenda." She said that this chronic shortage "is being dealt with by the Ministry of Health."

We all know, if we take a look at the report that was released today by the College of Physicians and Surgeons—they have released their 2006 registration statistics and survey of Ontario physicians, entitled 2006 Physician Resources in Ontario: Small Triumphs, Big Challenges. Last year, the college issued 2,961 medical licences. Thirty-seven per cent of those doctors graduated from an Ontario medical school; however, 42% came from a medical school outside North America. So I think we can appreciate that there is some reason for concern.

1410

However, the fact that the numbers are increasing is in large measure due to the initiatives that our government undertook between 1995 and 2003; in fact, the minister on many occasions lets us know that. If you take a look at the number of licences—and the government should look at this—issued to international medical graduates in 1995, it was 419. In 2003, thanks to our initiatives, that number had increased to 962—an increase of 130%. That's the increase in the number of international medical graduates, and so I think this government needs to acknowledge that fact.

They also need to acknowledge what the survey says: that we need a long-term-care plan to create more doctors, because we have an aging population, we have physicians retiring, there are more than a million people without a family doctor, including 130,000 children, and these patients without a doctor are waiting long hours for treatment in overcrowded emergency rooms throughout the province of Ontario and in walk-in clinics.

The other challenge that this CPSO report points out is that the number of family doctors accepting new patients is down to 9.6%. Just seven years ago, when we were in

office, 39% of family doctors reported they were accepting new patients. So I think you can see that there's a lot of work that needs to be done, and certainly there's a long-term-care plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Responses?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the statement made today, the Minister of Health has often said that the creation of the LHINs is going to result in decision-making that moves from Queen's Park closer to home, and that's going to make the LHIN board members more accountable to the people they serve in that geographic area. No doubt the LHIN board members are very well-intentioned people who care about health care and care about the delivery of health care, but the fact remains that they are controlled by the government, they are accountable to the government, and all the provisions in Bill 36 make that oh, so very clear.

"Cabinet may create, amalgamate, dissolve or divide a LHIN." It's cabinet that decides who will be appointed, who will be remunerated and at what level, and it's cabinet that decides who the chair and the vice-chair of the LHIN will be. It's cabinet that makes the determination about how long the members will continue to serve "at the 'pleasure' of cabinet," and they can be removed at any time without cause. Their reappointment is entirely dependent on cabinet.

A LHIN is explicitly defined as "an agent of the crown" in the legislation. The LHINs are funded "on the terms and conditions that the minister considers appropriate." While the LHINs may fund health care services, the funding must be "in accordance with government requirements, including the terms of the funding that the LHIN receives from the ministry, terms of the accountability agreement by which it is bound to the ministry, and any other requirements that cabinet may prescribe." At the end of the day, who sits on the LHINs and for how long, who is the chair, the vice-chair, how much money they get and how it is spent is all controlled by the government, and the accountability is back to the government.

This regrettably sets up the LHINs to take the fall or to take the flak for negative funding decisions made by the government, in the same way that the former Conservative government used the Health Services Restructuring Commission to take the flak for decisions made on hospital amalgamations or hospital closures. Indeed, the North East LHIN has already been the target of such an action, and this occurred even before funding transferred to the LHINs, which doesn't occur, of course, until April 1.

The matter in question involves an announcement of transitional long-term-care beds which was made on February 16, an announcement, interestingly enough, made by the LHIN boards and not by the government, even though the transfer of money had not taken place. Twenty-five new transitional long-term-care beds were announced for northeastern Ontario: 10 for Sudbury, 15 for Sault Ste. Marie. North Bay didn't get any interim long-term-care beds, even though they've got a problem

with alternate-level-of-care patients being in the hospital because there are no community services for them.

When asked by the media why North Bay didn't get these beds, the MPP for Nipissing said that the bed and funding allocation decisions were made by the LHIN. Strangely enough, when the media posed the same question to the LHIN chair, she said that the announcement on how much funding, when and where, and which facilities got beds was made by the government. Small wonder that the editorial in the North Bay Nugget of February 19 said:

"North Bay got shafted. Most likely this was the reaction of the ordinary citizen who read the report on page A2 of Saturday's Nugget.

"It concerned the allocation of new long-term-care beds in northeastern Ontario. North Bay and District Hospital got zilch. Others got a little, but not much.

"These were the essential facts. They were all wrapped up in a fog of bureaucratese"—bureaucratic nonsense—"apparently intended to convince the public that all is well and, most of all, distribute blame and evade responsibility.

"The government recently created the North East Local Health Integration Network—one of many similar outfits that are supposed to know and understand local problems better than distant bureaucrats at Queen's Park. They may, but they can also serve as nearly impenetrable cotton wool blankets protecting the bureaucrats and politicians from both decision-making and responsibility."

I regret to think that after April 1, we're going to see more of the same.

The final point I want to make has to do with First Nations and the lack of consultation by this government with respect to the setting up of the LHINs.

Alvin Fiddler came to our committee hearings, and I suggest that the Minister of Health read what he had to say, because he said this: "The province of Ontario committed itself to a new working relationship with First Nations in the document Ontario's New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs.... Since this declaration, and mindful of what has occurred over the last year, it can be said that the province has made no real efforts to fulfill its obligations to First Nations, including actively seeking First Nation input regarding Bill 36."

At a meeting that he was at last week, the Deputy Grand Chief reiterated those concerns. They are very concerned about the impact that LHINs will have on native health care, and the government has not fulfilled its responsibility to reply.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the minister in charge of lotteries. We've had four days, and this issue is not going away. In fact,

what is becoming clearer is that the version of events that you spin in this House is not adding up to what actually happened.

You say you didn't know about this rip-off at the lottery corporation until October 2006, yet we know an e-mail went into your office months before October 2006, to the man who in fact is now your chief of staff.

You say you've had no contact with the lottery corporation, yet the *Globe and Mail* reports that your office was advising the lottery corporation to "fight hard" rather than to "come clean."

We know that two of McGuinty's top political fixers were summoned to spin the scandal, going so far as to weave a tale with numbers pulled out of thin air.

But at no time—until you got caught—did you do anything to protect the interests of Ontarians. This is a monumental failure of leadership, in respect of which you should resign. Will you do the honourable thing and submit your resignation?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Of course, the member opposite is afraid to quote the Ombudsman, an independent officer of this Legislature, who commented on this matter, in the most sweeping and thorough review that was done—and I would say, by the way, we've had others and some that are ongoing.

I want to quote for the member opposite what the Ombudsman had to say on page 68: "I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change."

I know for a fact that Mr. Tory, the Leader of the Opposition, has written to the Ombudsman to ask him to clarify these sections of his report, and I know that the Ombudsman wrote back to him and said that his report speaks for itself.

In fact, the Ombudsman went further in his press conference held on Monday, and he said—and I have more of the Ombudsman's remarks that I will share with the member opposite about the actions that have ensued and the work in restoring the public trust and confidence in the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.

Mr. Tory: As usual, the minister is completely missing the point, which was that what we're looking into is the period well before October, when you did nothing. You sat on your duff and did absolutely nothing when information was brought to the attention of you and your office about people in Ontario being ripped off for millions of dollars.

In fact, yesterday the Ombudsman did write a letter in which he said, "I think the context of the comments in question is quite clear: They refer to the government's response to my completed investigation and my recommendations." In other words, when he gives all these words that you repeat so often, he's talking about what you did after you got caught, not about what you did any time before that. That's clearly what he's saying. You did not ask a single question of anybody. You didn't make an inquiry; you did nothing until you got caught and until it

became public—as weak an example of leadership and lack of leadership as we've ever seen.

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You have e-mails into your office. You have people calling. The people of Ontario have the right to expect that you would have acted before a story was on the air and before the Ombudsman investigated.

You should stand up and do the honourable thing and resign. Will you do it?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, I don't have to say what the Ombudsman says in other words; I can say what he says in his own words. And he did say at his press conference, and I would quote for the member opposite:

"I conclude that they"—the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.—"put profits ahead of public service. I think there was a point, a crossroads, in" the year "2002. At that point, the OLG could have gone two ways. It could have said, 'We'll apply the law and take the measures to act diligently.' One month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the Supreme Court didn't apply. Then it became a slippery slope."

That is what the Ombudsman says: that actions should have been taken in 2002. The minister who was responsible for the OLG, of course, was the member for Lanark—Carleton, Mr. Sterling, and I regret that these matters were swept under the rug. They were put in a closet and locked away. Others would look away, but this government chooses to shine a light on things in order to delve into them. It shows real leadership to take responsibility.

Mr. Tory: The fact remains that you did absolutely nothing about this until you got caught. The fact of the matter is that you did absolutely nothing. Let me quote from the Ombudsman's report. You're very fond of doing that. Let's quote from page 5: "...there are disturbing signs that the culture that led to the difficulties in the first place is not gone. It was not conscience or self-criticism that smartened the OLG up—it was a public relations nightmare, played out on the public airwaves despite its best efforts at suppression. A profound cultural shift has yet to occur..."

That's what he said, and in the meantime there are e-mails going back and forth between the very same corporation he's referring to and your staff and your office. I suspect that somewhere you knew about that because you just did—you are the minister. It's not conceivable or believable that your chief of staff didn't come and talk to you about it.

The bottom line is this: A true leader would have acted sooner. You sat and did nothing for months while people were ripped off to the tune of millions of dollars across this province—dozens of articles published, for that matter. These are just the articles from 2005 about Bob Edmonds. You did nothing.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I certainly am heartened to know that the leader of the official opposition has read the report. In fact, the Ombudsman went quite a bit further in his comments in his press conference, and I would quote

him again: "Of course we all know things began to happen quickly once the Edmonds case became public, and now have already some initiatives that have been implemented, such as"—and he goes on to list quite a few. Then the Ombudsman goes on: "Is the government committed to reforming the system and perhaps making it the best in the world? Certainly," he says, "I would find that very encouraging."

In fact, we already have taken action. Of the Ombudsman's and KPMG's recommendations, of the total sum of 60, 17 have already been implemented. By the end of June, another 25 will be fully operational. The remaining 18 have begun and are ongoing.

As well, we'll adhere to the Ombudsman's request that we report back on a regular basis to him and that we also report to the public on the significant progress we are making.

The Speaker: New question. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: To the minister of lotteries, maybe a couple of other quotes on page 2 of the Ombudsman's report: "In the immediate aftermath of the CBC program, the OLG responded by trying to downplay its revelations."

Or on page 21: "It appears that 2004 was a banner year for controversial insider prize claims." That's on your watch, during which time you did nothing.

Clearly we are here at an impasse. The minister's account doesn't jibe with the facts being reported in the media. An investigation is required. We need to know once and for all who knew what, when they knew it and what they did about it. The investigation needs to go into the lottery corporation, the minister's office and the Premier's office if people in Ontario are ever going to get any satisfaction as to what happened and why it happened when they got their money ripped off.

Will the minister agree to appoint such an investigation today—the minister's office, the Premier's office and the lottery corporation itself—a wide-ranging explanation so the people who got ripped off will know why, who was involved and who knew what? Will you do it?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: We've had several investigations. In fact, we've had an all-party committee of this Legislature. All members of all parties had a chance to talk to and go through Ontario Lottery and Gaming. We've had an independent officer of this Legislature, the Ombudsman, do one of the most sweeping investigations and prepare an excellent report. I've accepted all of the elements in the report and have committed—and the Ombudsman has taken the undertaking that we have made to make sure that his recommendations are implemented.

In addition to that, through the board chair, I called in KPMG to do a review. KPMG, of course, should be well known to Mr. Tory, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. They are in fact the auditor for your party and have an excellent worldwide reputation as leaders in this regard.

In addition to that, following the Ombudsman's allegation made in his press conference, I directed that all files that were reviewed be turned over to the Ontario Provincial Police for their review, and they will determine what the appropriate next steps are.

Mr. Tory: Let me just follow up on that last point. And by the way, you shut down the all-party committee you talk so fondly about.

But let's talk about the last point and the OPP. The minister says he has turned the files over to the OPP, and I'm sure they'll do a good job as far as they can go. But there's a problem with that. We obviously can't have the OPP investigating itself. Michael Sharland was the chief superintendent of the OPP until two weeks ago. He's also the head of security at the lottery corporation. We already have questions there about his role and the role that took place with respect to the Bob Edmonds case.

The OPP also can't investigate the minister's office or the Premier's office to determine what level of involvement your office and the Premier's office, Mr. McGuinty's office, had in all of this. So will the minister commit today to asking an outside police service to investigate this issue so that Ontarians can get the truth about how they got ripped off these millions of dollars by the lottery corporation and others, and who is involved and who knew what when? Will you commit to an outside police service investigating this?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: It's rather astounding that the leader of the official opposition continues to call for direction and police investigation into these matters. All members of this House understand the nature of how these matters are handled. The files have been turned over to the Ontario Provincial Police for their review. They will determine what the appropriate next steps are. I want you to know, Speaker, I trust the OPP. I trust them to determine whether and what type of review is warranted and I trust them to take the appropriate action.

The Ombudsman is thorough in his excellent report. He specifically recommends the separation of the judge and jury. I want this member to understand that we have already begun to work with my colleague Minister Phillips, the Minister of Government Services, to separate that out and have that proper oversight through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission. In fact, I know that Minister Phillips has already met with the Ombudsman.

These are the steps that leadership does take. Unfortunately, previous ministers and previous governments chose not to act when they had the opportunity, but this government does not shirk from its responsibilities.

Mr. Tory: What we really know is that the Dalton McGuinty government only acts on anything when they get caught. That's when you acted, when you got caught by the fact that you sat and did nothing for months and months while millions of dollars were stolen from innocent people around this province. That's the only time you did anything, and your first reaction and that of your spin doctors was to try to cover this up and spin a tale that would deflect, deny and defer people off the real issue.

The OPP can't investigate itself. The OPP can't investigate the minister's office and the OPP can't investigate the Premier's office. That's why we need an outside police force. We want to see, and the people of Ontario who buy these tickets want to see, the truth. A terrible injustice has happened here, and the fact is that for two years the McGuinty Liberals did absolutely nothing until they got caught. We need an investigation into this entire sordid mess. Why doesn't the minister commit to getting to the bottom of this, ask an outside police service to investigate and then, as that last good thing that he might do, submit his resignation, which would be a second good thing?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Several investigations have already taken place. In fact, the member opposite talks about the standing committee. I recall from the Hansard of the committee on November 22, Laurie Scott, PC member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock: “I think the report we’re providing should reflect what we heard at the time. That’s maybe why this was taken out originally. I’m trying to remember back. I think we should not go down that path. No disrespect, but I think we should just leave it as the time at which the committee heard the agency’s testimony.”

Even members of his own caucus do not agree, unfortunately, with the leader of the official opposition’s position. I want this House to know that public trust and confidence in their corporation, in this agency, is paramount, and this government has taken actions where others and previous governments refused to, where they looked the other way, where they hid it away in a corner. We’ve opened those doors, we’ve shone a light on it, and action has been taken.

1430

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: What does a member do when a minister of the crown continues to charge me with false accusations about my responsibility for the Ontario Lottery Corp. during 2002? I was responsible for the regulatory arm, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, not the lottery corporation. I ask the minister to apologize for attacking my reputation.

The Speaker: A member obviously always has the opportunity to put before the House questions of privilege. I am in no position to counsel members on how they should approach these things, but there are ways that you can put your position.

New question. Leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the minister responsible for lotteries. Every week thousands of Ontarians put aside some of their hard-earned pay to buy a lottery ticket. Most know that their chance of winning may not be excellent, but at the very least, they expect that the government, your government, is going to run a fair lottery. But under your watch, the McGuinty government did not run a fair lottery. In fact, the McGuinty government has been running fraudulent lotteries. So my question is this, Minister: When are you finally going to admit that you failed to do

your job and you failed to protect those innocent Ontarians who were subject to lottery fraud?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I certainly accept the Ombudsman’s report that this corporation was set up incorrectly, that it was both the operator-retailer, the judge and jury, the investigator, and that should not have taken place. In fact, that was set up under the third party. It was nurtured in the culture of an organization which was ultimately conflicted, it was nurtured by the Conservatives when they were the government, and it has finally taken this government—of course, the Ombudsman has shone the light on this, as have others—and this minister to take the necessary steps and the responsible steps to make sure that we separate out and fix that flaw which was set in place.

I have begun the work with my colleague the Minister of Government Services, Mr. Phillips, and with the Ombudsman to make sure that we have the proper regime and the proper regulatory oversight to make sure that Ontarians—

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, for a week now, you’ve been trying to tell those innocent people across Ontario who were cheated in your lottery that you knew nothing. I have news for you: No one believes you. A woman who wrote to us today said, “I can only say I am sickened by the lack of respect, morality and integrity shown by the government.” Another person writes, “I strongly believe that David Caplan should resign from his position.”

We also heard from another courageous older gentleman who says he can’t understand how you could be unaware of the problems at the OLG. His name is Bob Edmonds. Minister, why do you think Bob Edmonds doesn’t believe you?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I have certainly apologized to Mr. Edmonds for the hardship that he was placed under. His case began in 2001. Mr. Hudak, the member from Erie–Lincoln, was the minister at those times, and I cannot provide any insight into what actions were ordered, what was asked to be done. I do know that the Ombudsman comments on this matter quite directly, and I would quote the Ombudsman from his press conference on Monday for the member opposite. He says:

“I conclude that they”—the OLG—“put profits ahead of public service. I think there was a point, a crossroads, in 2002.... At that point, the OLG could have gone two ways. It could have said, ‘We’ll apply the law and take the measures to act diligently.’ One month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the Supreme Court didn’t apply.” Then it became a slippery slope.

I agree with the Ombudsman, with his assessment and with his conclusions and recommendations. That’s why action has been taken to make sure that this kind of situation does not happen again.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, I’ll tell you why Bob Edmonds doesn’t believe you. Under your watch, you spent \$200,000 trying to silence him and keep his story out of the media. And then, when his story did break in

the media, you went out and engaged two Liberal hacks, the Premier's former communications person and Warren Kinsella, to try to discredit him. That's why he doesn't believe you. Mr. Edmonds's lawyer says, "Unless Mr. Caplan is suggesting that no one from the government reads the newspapers or watches TV, I don't see how he can credibly say the government wasn't aware of Mr. Edmonds's claim."

Minister, there is a way that you can clear this up. You can turn over your e-mails, your records and your briefing books from the time you became minister. That would clear this up. Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I would say to the member that an all-party legislative committee has taken a look at the OLG, and the Ombudsman has done the most sweeping and thorough investigation of this matter. He is an independent officer of this Legislature, unbiased and non-partisan. I have ordered that all of the files that the Ombudsman reviewed be turned over to the Ontario Provincial Police for their review. I trust the Ontario Provincial Police to do the right thing, to make the right determination, to understand and to determine what the next steps ought to be. I have tremendous confidence in the Ontario Provincial Police.

But I would also say to the member opposite that there is a change to a higher standard right across the country. In Nova Scotia, we have a government investigating its lottery corporation. In New Brunswick, the Ombudsman there is looking into it and investigating. In British Columbia, the Ombudsman too has launched an investigation.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): We've got a crooked minister.

The Speaker: I would ask the member for Niagara Centre to withdraw.

Mr. Kormos: I withdraw.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the minister responsible for the lottery corporation: Innocent people across Ontario who were defrauded, innocent people who work hard and play by the rules every day, simply do not believe you. Bob Edmonds doesn't believe you did your job.

You became minister responsible for the lottery corporation in June 2005. Just before that, Bob Edmonds's case of lottery fraud was settled. You know what, Minister? These are some of the newspapers that covered it: CanWest, the National Post, the Ottawa Citizen, the Guelph Daily Mercury, the Brantford Expositor, the Sarnia Observer, Canada Press Newswire, CTV National News, the Hamilton Spectator, the Sault Ste. Marie Star, the Peterborough Examiner. Minister, if you really didn't know what was going on, why won't you release your own briefing books, e-mails and records? That way, we would know whether you were in the dark or—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, the Ombudsman spoke quite clearly in his press conference, where he talked about the government and the actions that have taken place. "Of course, we all know," he says, "that things

began to happen quickly once the Edmonds case became public, and we have now seen some initiatives that have been implemented, such as a lowering of the insider win policy from \$50,000 to \$10,000."

In fact, there has been a great deal more than that which has ensued. Of the recommendations of both the Ombudsman and KPMG—more than 60 in total have come up—17 have already been implemented; 25 are under way and will be complete by the end of June. The remaining 18 are under way and working along.

For example, as the Ombudsman recommended, a public statement has been posted on the website. The KPMG report has been made available. As well, an action plan to implement all 40 of them has—sorry—

The Speaker: Supplementary.

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Mr. Hampton: Minister, it was covered in the Globe and Mail, it was covered in the Montreal Gazette, it was covered in the Halifax newspapers, the Regina newspaper, the Saskatoon newspaper, the Edmonton newspaper—It was covered by virtually every newspaper and radio network in Ontario. That's why Bob Edmonds doesn't believe you. He doesn't believe you could be that totally oblivious, that clued out.

There is no greater fraud than a government defrauding the public, and there's a way for you to clear this up. What are you trying to hide, Minister? Why won't you release your own e-mails, your own briefing books and your own records so that we can see? Either you were totally in the dark and didn't know what was going on or someone's not telling the truth.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, if I could expand on the earlier answer that I was providing, 8,800 self-checking devices have been made available and will be fully rolled out by the end of June. To date, 4,000 have already been installed. As I mentioned, the OLG insider-win policy threshold is down from \$50,000 to \$10,000. OLG escalates all insider-wins to corporate security and surveillance. Insider win investigations include interviews with retailers to verify purchasing information and previous playing patterns. Only when the investigation is complete and the claim proved to be valid is the prize paid out. If the OLG believes there's a serious concern with the retailer lottery prize claim, the appropriate police authorities are contacted immediately. All instant ticket processes have been detailed, and formal documentation is under way. Additionally, I am working with my colleague Minister Phillips to implement the oversight and the regulatory regime.

Ontarians can have every confidence that when they spend that toonie or that loonie on a game at Ontario Lottery and Gaming, it is a fair one and it is one they can have trust—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: You know what, Minister? None of these things that you talk about is going to do anything for the hundreds and possibly thousands of people who were defrauded out of money in a fraudulent lottery under your watch. It won't do one stitch.

Bob Edmonds doesn't believe you, because he settled out of court and it was covered in no less than 81 different news outlets just as you became minister. You say you were totally oblivious; you had no clue what was going on. Well, Minister, Bob Edmonds doesn't believe you. But there is one way you can convince him. You can do what you have ordered the lottery corporation to do. You ordered them to turn over their records. Will you, Minister, turn over your records, your briefing books, your e-mails so that Bob Edmonds will know whether you're telling the truth or you were totally in the dark?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I know that Mr. Edmonds has accepted the apology, certainly from myself and from the former president and CEO of the lottery corporation, Mr. Brown, when they spoke directly.

As soon as I did become aware, I acted quickly by ordering a third party review, the KPMG report, which forms a big part of the Ombudsman's recommendations, 40 of which are implemented. And when the Ombudsman said in his press conference that he felt there were—and made—some very serious allegations, immediate action ensued to deal with the matter that the member has raised here. I instructed Ontario Lottery and Gaming to ensure that all files and all other relevant information would be turned over to the Ontario Provincial Police for their review. In fact, the Ontario Provincial Police will make the determination about what the next steps are. I have faith and confidence in them to be able to get to the bottom of the matter.

The Speaker: New question. The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: A question to the minister for lotteries. Clearly, the whole situation with respect to what you did, what you knew, what your office knew, what the Premier's office knew, what their involvement is, is a big issue here. It's a big issue with the public. The leader of the third party, the leader of the NDP, says that there are people out there who don't believe you. There are lots of them. We see them talking on television every night. It's a big issue in here. There are people who don't believe we're getting to the bottom of this.

No one has looked at these files so far. For all the investigations you point to that have been done, no one has looked at your files, your briefing books, your memos, your appointment calendar and so on. So if you're so strongly of the belief that you want to be open and transparent, if you're not trying to hide anything, if you're not trying to cover up and you really want to help the people who got bilked to understand what went on here, will you make those documents public? Will you make those documents subject to being reviewed so we can see exactly what you did and when?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I understand the nature of this place. Members opposite engage in partisan activities and partisan views, and that's perfectly acceptable within this chamber. But we do have legislative officers who are independent, who are unbiased, who are non-partisan. The Ombudsman conducted the most sweeping investigation of this matter, and in fact, he says, "I commend the min-

ister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change."

That is in stark contrast to the way these matters were dealt with previously by ministers like Sterling, Hudak and others who swept these matters under the carpet, who put it in a closet and locked it away. It took this government to welcome the Ombudsman's investigation, to bring in KPMG, to refer the matter to the police, to shine the light of day on these matters and to take quick and decisive action to protect the public interest.

Mr. Tory: The Ombudsman's letter of yesterday makes it very clear that he has not at any time commented on what you did or, more precisely, did not do prior to October 2006. The answer is, there's not much for him to comment on. He would have reached the same conclusion as everybody else: You sat on your duff and you did nothing while people had millions of dollars stolen from them.

While we're at it, in terms of all the things you won't turn over to anybody to look at because you're trying to cover them up and keep them secret, we do have the evidence of the political fixers being sent in to cover this up and to concoct some story to mislead the public and the press. The Premier and you said yesterday that the lottery corporation hired Mr. Kinsella. We'll know how much Mr. Warren makes from the sunshine list that will come out tomorrow. Will you come here—in addition to your books, your memos, your calendars, your briefing notes, will you table Mr. Kinsella's contract, showing us how much he made and who signed the contract? Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: As the Premier indicated yesterday, Ontario Lottery and Gaming, independently and on their own, makes the day-to-day decisions and did choose to hire Bob Reid, a very well-known gentleman to you. Their information is available under freedom of information, as are others.

The member knows full well from his colleagues who have served in the capacity that certainly a minister does not make the day-to-day operational decisions at Ontario Lottery and Gaming, nor the personnel decisions that are made there. I can tell you, though, that this government, unlike the previous, is committed to the highest standard of accountability and transparency. That's why, in fact, we've had a standing committee of the Legislature take a look at Ontario Lottery and Gaming and other agencies, where a previous government absolutely refused to do so. That's why we welcomed the Ombudsman and his investigation. We've embraced his report, accepted his recommendations and have begun implementing them. That's why, in the spirit, and directed because of the comments of the Ombudsman that the files be turned—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Hampton: My question is for the minister responsible for lotteries. Bob Edmonds, that very courageous senior who took on the lottery corporation to prove that he had been the subject of lottery fraud, doesn't believe you. He doesn't believe that while the

lottery corporation was spending \$200,000 in 2005 and 2006 trying to silence him, you knew nothing. He doesn't believe you when you say that you didn't know that big Liberal Party fixer Warren Kinsella had been hired to discredit Mr. Edmonds and his story. He doesn't believe that you didn't know about that. But there is a way for you to clear the air.

The question is this: Will you turn over your briefing books, your e-mails and your own records so that Mr. Edmonds will have a chance to know whether or not you're telling the truth? Will you do that, Minister?

1450

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Mr. Edmonds, unfortunately, was treated in an incredibly disrespectful manner and in a manner that I don't think any Ontarian ought to be treated; unfortunately, that happened under the watch of a previous government. We have Mr. Sterling, a former minister. We have Mr. Hudak, also a former minister. I can't tell you why they chose the actions that were taken at the time, why Mr. Edmonds was put through the ordeal that he was.

On behalf of the people of Ontario, I have apologized to Mr. Edmonds. The president and CEO, Mr. Brown, also took the opportunity formally to apologize to Mr. Edmonds. I am certainly—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The interjections are just going a little bit over the top here.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'd ask the member for Lanark—Carleton to withdraw his comments.

Mr. Sterling: Which comment? That he's a piece of work? Withdrawn.

The Speaker: Just withdraw. Withdrawn. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, the Ombudsman himself comments on the government's sincerity and the government's determination, where he says in his report, on page 69, "I am happy to see that both the government and OLG appear to be headed in the right direction."

That's the kind of leadership that this government has brought. We've shone a light on these matters, and we've taken decisive action to make sure that Bob Edmonds and the Bob Edmondses of the world are not treated in disrespectful fashion yet again.

I want all members to know that I treat this matter with all of the seriousness that it deserves, as does the Premier and the government.

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, all those words do not do a thing to restore to those people who were cheated in the lottery fraud under your watch, and they do nothing to give confidence to Mr. Bob Edmonds.

The other day you suggested that the lottery corporation should turn over their records to the police, and you suggest that there was a sweeping investigation, but no one has been able to look at your briefing book, your records or your e-mail. You are the person who was ultimately responsible. You are the person who's supposed

to protect the public interest. I'm going to ask you again: Will you turn over your briefing books, your e-mails or your records? What do you have to hide, Minister? Why are you trying so hard to hide the only thing that really will provide a sweeping investigation?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The Ombudsman of Ontario is non-partisan—unlike members of the this House is unbiased—unlike all members of this House, I say quite fairly. The Ombudsman is independent and has, under the act granted by this Legislative Assembly, broad and sweeping powers to be able to investigate, and he did conduct his own investigation under his act, perhaps one of the most thorough reviews of the lottery and gaming corporation in this province's history in my knowledge and certainly in my memory. I accept his recommendations and report.

On Monday, the Ombudsman made a serious allegation in his news conference. That is why I took very quick and decisive action to make sure to direct Ontario Lottery and Gaming to provide all of the files that the Ombudsman reviewed and any other files that the OPP would deem necessary. I directed all of that information to be turned over to the police for—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As former chair of the Toronto Community Housing Corp., I've learned over the years that stability and security for families in Ontario begins with a place called home. All Ontarians need a roof over their heads. This is a concern found all over the province, and my constituency in Willowdale is no exception. Housing advocates want to know what our government is doing to ensure more Ontarians than ever have access to affordable living accommodations.

Minister, could you provide this House with the details of our government's plan to help municipalities build new, affordable housing and rehabilitate existing housing units across the province?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): One of the real good-news stories in the budget last week was the fact that this government is investing \$392 million for those with housing needs in our province. It starts off with a program of new housing allowances to 27,000 different families clear across this province that are going to be helped with their housing needs. Rent is going to be paid for to the tune of \$100 per month. That's going to help 27,000 families that are currently on the waiting list across this province. That will cost \$185 million. We are also investing \$127 million of \$392 million for our housing service managers across this province to assist with either the building of new affordable housing or with rehabilitating existing affordable housing that's already out there. We're also investing another \$80 million for the aboriginal housing community that's out there.

Mr. Zimmer: As chair of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, I promoted the revitalization of the Regent Park neighbourhood here in Toronto, a neighbourhood represented by my colleague George Smitherman, who provided tremendous help in promoting this revitalization. I've watched that community, as well as others in Toronto, grow and develop over the last number of years with great pride.

By announcing our latest investments last week, our government took another step in creating new affordable housing opportunities for the most vulnerable households in Ontario. In fact, in response to our budget last week, the executive director of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, Sharad Kerur, said, "We hope these commitments will serve as the building blocks of healthy communities."

Minister, what work has our government done to assist the most vulnerable households in Ontario so that they may have safe and affordable shelter?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: We are living up to our commitment to create 20,000 new affordable housing units during our first mandate, in addition to a total of 35,000 new housing allowances for families that are out there. What has already been done up to now is that there are 6,600 housing supplements that are going to families on an ongoing basis, an increase of some 3,500 over what we inherited back in 2003.

We also have a housing supplement program, under the strong communities rent supplement program, that will commit \$50 million per year for 20 years—that's total of \$1 billion—to help rent supplements across this province. That's in addition to the rent banks we have set up across this province, which have been funded to the tune of \$18 million, that have helped over 8,800 families stay in their homes when they were involved in an emergency situation.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: The NDP may laugh about this, but we think it's real progress over what happened before. More and more people are going to be helped in their housing needs across this province through these various housing allowances, rent supplements and new affordable—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): My question is for the minister responsible for lotteries, and it has to do with Bob Edmonds, the 81-year-old senior who was cheated out of \$250,000—the same Bob Edmonds who doesn't believe you, doesn't believe that you knew nothing about what was happening at the OLG under your watch.

Minister, the trust of thousands, if not the total population of the province of Ontario, has been shattered by this scandal. People were cheated out of possibly millions of dollars in winnings while you apparently sat on your

hands or slept under your desk; we're not sure which. This has now been compounded by your failing to fully compensate Mr. Edmonds for his legal costs. This is shameful. You've paid hundreds of the thousands of dollars for legal firms to fight this man, and now you're not fully compensating him for his legal costs. Will you indicate today that you're prepared to fully compensate him for those costs?

1500

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I have apologized to Mr. Edmonds; former president and CEO Mr. Brown has. This member was the chair of the executive council for the province of Ontario, I believe, when Mr. Edmonds's case surfaced. I would ask Mr. Runciman if he would do likewise, if he would apologize to Bob Edmonds. His colleagues who sat around the cabinet table, who unfortunately looked the other way or, perhaps even worse, have refused to stand in their place and take responsibility for their actions—I would say that this member should stand in his place and apologize to Mr. Edmonds, as I have. I understand if the member won't. This government takes responsibility, where others previously have swept these matters under the rug. This government has taken action to clean up this mess, where other governments locked it away and hid it in a closet.

Mr. Runciman: Talk about a spineless and insulting response—we just heard it from that minister. This is beyond the pale. I asked him about an 81-year-old man who had been wronged by the system in this province. That government paid \$600,000 to a law firm to fight this man tooth and nail throughout the years. They're now leaving him stuck with a bill of over \$70,000 that he's been tagged with, and this minister gets up and makes sleazy comments like he just did.

I'm asking you again: Will you pay Mr. Edmonds what he was stuck with—a \$72,000 legal bill? Will you do that? Will you commit to paying that bill today?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I understand the partisan nature—sometimes the rhetoric goes over the top.

I want the member to know that Mr. Edmonds' lawyer has asked OLG to cover the remaining balance of his legal costs. I can inform the member that I've directed the board and the corporation to review the request and to give it due consideration. I'm hopeful that a satisfactory resolution to the outstanding issue will be reached in quick order, in order to put closure to the sorry saga that Mr. Edmonds has had to endure, unfortunately, under past government. If the board agrees, I would want all members to know that I would be very supportive of that decision.

This government has a hallmark and a history of taking action, of doing the right thing. Unfortunately, that has not always been the case. We have former ministers in the House—I've asked Mr. Runciman if he would stand in his place and apologize for the role that he and his colleagues played in the treatment of Mr. Edmonds,

and unfortunately one has not been forthcoming, and I won't—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the minister responsible for the lottery corporation. Minister, now that Bob Edmonds has exposed the fraudulent lotteries at the lottery corporation, you say that you now want to clean up the situation, but at the same time you say that you didn't hear, you didn't know, that senior Liberal fixers Jim Warren and Warren Kinsella had been contracted to conduct a false and misleading campaign to discredit Bob Edmonds.

Minister, my question is this: If indeed you want to clean the organization up, when is Jim Warren, who organized the false and misleading campaign to discredit Mr. Edmonds, going to be fired from the OLG?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The leader of the third party knows full well that Mr. Warren was hired by Mr. Brown, the former president and CEO, well over one year ago. In fact, his employment, as with all employees of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., is not directed by myself, as the member is well familiar with. I'm not involved in the day-to-day operational decisions and the personnel decisions of that agency.

The Ombudsman in fact commends me and commends the government for taking the appropriate response and the appropriate actions in regard to his report. The Ombudsman notes in his report, both on page 68 and page 69, but also in his press conference, where he says, "Is the government committed to reforming the system and perhaps making it the best in the world?" The Ombudsman answers his own question and says, "Certainly I would find that very encouraging."

I understand the partisan nature of all members opposite, but the Ombudsman, independent, unbiased—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: There's nothing partisan about this. This is somebody who was hired at the OLG. He is currently being paid a salary in the range of \$200,000 a year. We know from other work that's been done that he set out to discredit Mr. Edmonds, that he in fact put out a false and misleading story to try to discredit Mr. Edmonds and all of the details surrounding his unfortunate lottery fraud situation. You say you want to clean up the OLG. Well, my question is: Why is Jim Warren, who would put out a false and misleading attack on Mr. Edmonds, still at the OLG, being paid something like \$200,000 a year, if you want to clean up the OLG?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: All of the employees of government ministries and government agencies are subject to the salary disclosure laws, and Mr. Warren is no different. The Ombudsman is quite critical of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. for treating the Fifth Estate investigative journalism program, in the Ombudsman's words, as a "public relations exercise," as opposed to dealing with the substantive matters raised in the show. I agree with the Ombudsman. I think he is fair and balanced. I think his review, his investigation, yielded much

good information and, more importantly, good direction for the government to follow to make sure that the fatal flaw that it was set up with by New Democrats, nurtured by Conservatives, would be fixed. This government and myself as minister have taken appropriate action. Seventeen of the recommendations from the Ombudsman and KPMG have already been implemented, 25 more are on the way and will be completed by the end of June, and the rest—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

CRYSTAL METH

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, you will recall that about a year ago, the front page of the Toronto Star said that my hometown, Stratford, in my riding of Perth–Middlesex, was the crystal meth capital of Ontario. As I have said before, if the devil himself were to create a deadly narcotic drug, he would have made crystal meth. It is a scourge in our community. It is something we've been warned about from our sister provinces and the western United States.

So what I want to tell you is that my community and Perth county came together to form a task force. From right across our community, municipal leaders, our first responders and treatment centres all came together with the health unit. We came up with a vision of Perth county being a meth-free zone. We're going to run this suicide drug out of our community.

I know, Minister, that you were able to come and visit Stratford and meet with those people. I'd like you to share with us what our government is doing to eradicate the scourge of crystal meth in my riding and right across this province.

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I want to commend the member from Perth–Middlesex for his leadership and for what the Perth county task force on crystal meth has been doing.

About two and a half years ago, I had the occasion with the leadership of the OPP to visit Wisconsin and Minnesota to talk to them about grow-ops. They seemed to think that grow-ops were not a problem for them but crystal meth was, and that crystal meth was something we should really be preparing for, because if we didn't have it, we were going to get it. I have to say that crystal meth is a dangerous drug because it can be made from readily available ingredients. It's easy to do and it's a scourge that really is very, very serious.

As a result of that, we have initiated several things. One of the things we've done is to set up a mock crystal meth lab at the police college in Aylmer to train police officers to identify them, to be able to disassemble them, and to make sure that they and others—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Wilkinson: On behalf of all of my constituents, I want to thank the minister, because in our recent provincial budget there was \$1 million allocated to the Perth county crystal meth task force. Because we have a vision of Perth county as a meth-free zone, we've taken it upon ourselves, with the support now of our provincial government, to crack the problem of crystal meth. We realize there are three things we have to do: We have to educate our public to avoid this drug. If you take it, you have a 90% chance of being addicted with the first use and then you have a life expectancy of just seven years. It's a suicide drug. We have to educate, we have to help our law enforcement to crack down on this drug, and then we have to treat those unfortunate people who are addicted to it.

After saying thank you yet again from my community, I'd ask the minister: What do we expect from the crystal meth task force, the pilot project? What will be the benefit to all of us in this province?

1510

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: I think it's important to realize that we also had set up a green tide action group to look at grow-ops. We've now asked them to expand their investigation into the area of crystal meth because crystal meth is as dangerous as, if not more dangerous than, what is happening with the grow-ops from a health point of view.

I should also say that the \$1 million that has been allocated in this year's budget to the Perth county task force is to allow them to come up with a strategy that will help us address the identification, the dismantling and the education of those people who will be exposed to crystal meth. This is a very serious issue. It's an issue that permeates a lot of rural Ontario and is making its way through eastern Canada. We're very concerned about it and we are providing the resources to make sure we can deal with it in an effective way.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, or should I say the minister of oblivion? Minister, what we do know—

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): If you're going to address a question in this House, you have to address it to a minister, not make some flippant remark like that with it when you're addressing it. I thought John Tory was going to bring about a new way of running this House. This means nothing.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly we've touched a nerve.

Minister, here are some of the things we do know.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I need the government House leader to withdraw that last remark.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I withdraw the word "hypocrisy."

Mr. Yakabuski: We're back into the yo-yo game here.

Minister, here's what we do know: Virtually every news outlet in this country knew about this mess. The OLG spent \$630,000 defending themselves against an 82-year-old man bilked out of his winnings. Senior staffers in your office have admitted and acknowledged that they knew all about it. Warren Kinsella and Jim Warren, people so close to the Premier they could borrow clothes from one another, knew all about it and have had their fingerprints all over it. Yet you continue to deny that you had any knowledge of this issue.

Minister, don't you know that everywhere out there the people know that you have no credibility whatsoever left on this issue? Will you, in the absence of your willingness to disclose the information that has been asked for with regard to your e-mails, do the only responsible thing and resign your position until we can get to the bottom of this?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I understand, as I said earlier, the partisan nature of this Legislature, but we do have an unbiased, non-partisan independent officer of this Legislature, and he doesn't agree with the member opposite. He says in his press conference, "I conclude that they"—the OLG—"put profits ahead of public service. There was a point, a crossroads," in the year 2002 and I would indicate to Mr. Yakabuski that it was his colleague Mr. Sterling, the member from Lanark–Carleton, and Mr. Hudak, the member from Erie–Lincoln, who were ministers at that time. "At that point, the OLG could have gone two ways," says the Ombudsman. "It could have said, 'We'll apply the law and take the measures to act diligently.' One month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the Supreme Court didn't apply. Then it became a slippery slope." Quite clearly, the Ombudsman does not agree with Mr. Yakabuski or the leader of the official opposition. There was a time to act, but thank God we have a government in place now that will act to protect the public interest.

Mr. Yakabuski: I am not surprised but I can't believe, and I know the people of Ontario cannot believe, the arrogance and the insolence of the responses by this minister. He likes to quote from one single portion of the Ombudsman report that sheds some positive light, but it has nothing to do with the actions of this minister prior to this report. That is what the question is here, Mr. Minister: your actions prior to this report. The people of Ontario have a right to believe and trust in the integrity of their lottery system. As long as you're at the helm, that is

impossible. That is the crux of the matter, Minister. You have a responsibility, not only to the people of Ontario but to the integrity of the system that they want to trust, to step aside until this matter can be cleared. For the sake of every citizen in this province, do the right thing. I'll ask you one more time: Please step aside until this can be cleared.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The Ombudsman disagrees with Mr. Yakabuski and the Conservative caucus. He says that if the recommendations he makes in his report, taken together with the recommendations that KPMG has recommended, public trust and confidence should be restored into Ontario's lottery and gaming system. I agree with the Ombudsman. That's why, when he says in his news conference on Monday, "Is the government committed to reforming the system and perhaps making it the best in the world?" he answers his own question. He says, "Certainly. I would find that very encouraging."

The Ombudsman disagrees with you; I disagree with the member opposite because I know that of the actions we have taken in those 60 recommendations, 17 have already been implemented, 25 more by the end of June, and 18 have begun and are under way. I have begun to work with my colleague Minister Phillips, the Minister of Government Services, to put the appropriate regulatory regime in place to fix the fatal flaw that—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the minister responsible for lotteries: Minister, earlier this week you passed the buck for investigating your Lottogate lottery fraud to the OPP, but there is growing evidence that the OPP was already in a conflict-of-interest situation in the Bob Edmonds lottery fraud case. You repeatedly said, when asked questions about what was going on in the ministry, that you were not aware, that you did not know. Minister, were you not aware of the allegations of conflict of interest against the OPP when you indicated the OPP should investigate your Lottogate lottery fraud?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: That a member of this Legislature—in fact, a former Attorney General of this province—would make that kind of charge and show that disrespect for the Ontario Provincial Police is quite astounding.

The Ombudsman in his Monday press conference made a very serious allegation—so serious, in fact, that I directed Ontario Lottery and Gaming to turn over all of the files that were reviewed to the OPP. I want this member, all members and all Ontarians to know that I trust our police. I trust them to do the right thing. I trust them to determine whether and what type of review is warranted. I trust the Ontario Provincial Police to take the appropriate action, as this government has, to protect the public trust and confidence. I have faith and confidence in Chief Fantino and the Ontario Provincial Police to uphold that public trust, unlike the member opposite.

VISITORS

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier, during ministerial statements, I had the opportunity to talk about Jiri Fischer from the Detroit Red Wings, whose life was saved by a defibrillator at the arena when he was playing in an NHL game. He has joined us in the gallery. I'd like to introduce Jiri Fischer from the Detroit Red Wings, his fiancée, Avery, and their son, Lukash, and thank them very much for their support of the defibrillator program.

1520

PETITIONS

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition regarding lab services at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) has indicated its support for moving significant parts of its laboratory operations to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie; and

"Whereas MAHC has indicated that it intends to cease doing community-based lab work if it does not receive \$150,000 more in funding from the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the impact of such decisions will negatively affect timely health care delivery to residents of Muskoka, while increasing the overall cost to taxpayers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain hospital and community-based lab services at the existing facilities in Bracebridge and Huntsville, including restoration of lab services that have recently been contracted out to hospitals in Sudbury and Barrie."

I support this petition.

LAKERIDGE HEALTH

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition that was given to me by the CAW retired workers. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Durham hospitals currently receive \$270 per person less funding than the rest of Ontario; and

"Whereas our hospitals need strong community support to address the issues of hospital funding inequity between hospitals in Durham region and hospitals outside the GTA 905 corridor; and

"Whereas the Ontario government, by providing \$7 million in ongoing funding and a one-time grant of a \$1-million cash infusion, is forcing Lakeridge Health to cut costs by \$8 million; and

"Whereas these cuts come in the form of (1) major reductions in addiction care, child and adolescent mental

health and crisis intervention services; (2) coverage of payment to physicians; (3) potential consolidations of some services from smaller sites such as Bowmanville and Port Perry to the Oshawa site and other so-called 'efficiencies'.

"Therefore, be it resolved that the CAW, Local 222, Retired Workers Chapter, representing some 9,500 retired auto workers and their families in Durham, call on the Ontario government to support Lakeridge Health to (1) maintain essential core services at each site according to their current health service plan; (2) maintain their current addiction and mental health programs; and (3) maintain the current level of Lakeridge Health staff positions, volunteers and foundations whose caring, hard work and dedication have helped Lakeridge Health rank in the top 25% of hospitals in terms of efficiencies."

I am pleased to support this on behalf of Jerry Ouellette, Christine Elliott and myself, as well as Marion Saunders, the foundation's chair, and present it to George Smitherman.

ADULT EDUCATION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's a bit long, but I'll try to read it as quickly as I can.

"Whereas Citizens for Lifelong Learning promotes the importance of providing educational programs to Ontario communities which are affordable, local and accessible. In Toronto such programs have been the tradition for nearly 150 years with the Toronto District School Board;

"Whereas these programs serve not only seniors and adults of average employment but also a large number of low-income earners, immigrants, widows, mothers, pensioners, the handicapped and users of social assistance. The program provides mental, physical and social benefit and generally enriches the quality of community life;

"Whereas such programming can best be offered by going through the board of education in communities across Ontario; with 2,280 schools, they are the best places to offer these programs because of their accessibility to residents and availability of suitable facilities and staff;

"Whereas these cuts reached their peak during the previous government" of Mike Harris;

"Whereas the McGuinty government indicated a commitment prior to and during the last election campaign to focus on keeping seniors well and active as well as promising to not let schools fall behind because of flawed funding; and

"Whereas currently seniors alone pay more than \$0.5 billion in education taxes and receive no support for lifelong learning programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ... request that the Ministry of Education take ... action to mandate and subsidize these

lifelong learning programs that are desperately needed by seniors for their physical, mental and social health."

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature to it and give it to page Alex who is here with me today.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

"Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston."

I agree with the petition and I have signed it.

SMITHS FALLS ECONOMY

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Hershey Canada has announced the closure of its Smiths Falls plant, putting 500 people out of work; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has announced that it will close the Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls as of 2009, putting another 800-plus people out of work; and

"Whereas these closures will result in additional job losses at local suppliers to Hershey, such as dairy farms, local tourism operators and all local businesses; and

"Whereas the 9,200 residents of Smiths Falls will be devastated by these 1,300-plus job losses;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the government of Ontario continue to work with Hershey to reverse the decision to close the Smiths Falls plant;

"That the government of Ontario immediately fund infrastructure projects in Smiths Falls like the hospital redevelopment in order to attract new industry;

"That the government of Ontario complete the four-laning of Highway 7 and the reconstruction of Highway 15 at an accelerated pace;

"That the government of Ontario postpone the closure of the Rideau Regional Centre at least until it has replaced the 800 jobs with an equal number of new public sector jobs; and

"That the government of Ontario create a fund equivalent to the northern Ontario heritage fund to attract investment to eastern Ontario."

I sign this, fully in support of my constituents.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas" we "will not meet the needs of" an "aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the ... new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I agree with the petition and I have signed it.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the proposed Long-Term Care Homes Act is extremely lengthy and complex and requires full and extensive parliamentary and public debate and committee hearings throughout the province; and

"Whereas the rigid, pervasive and detailed framework proposed is excessive and will stifle innovation and flexibility in the long-term-care sector; and

"Whereas the additional burden, red tape and punitive measures imposed by the proposed legislation will aggravate and exacerbate the chronic underfunding of the sector, to the detriment of residents of the homes; and

"Whereas the proposed legislation will have serious implications for the viability of the for-profit, and not-

for-profit, charitable and municipal long-term-care sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand that the McGuinty government withdraw the proposed act, or remove the offending sections, and fulfill its commitment by a substantial increase in funding on a multi-year basis in the order of the promised \$6,000 per resident, per year."

This is signed by many people from the riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I apologize for the remarks that I may have made earlier that were out of order.

My petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 122,000 households across Ontario are on waiting lists for affordable housing, enduring wait times of five to 10 years;

"Whereas housing affordability problems are worsening in Ontario, with one tenant household in five paying at least 50% of its income on rent, and almost 65,000 facing eviction in 2005 because they couldn't afford to pay their rent;

"Whereas Ontario's current social housing stock is increasingly rundown, with tenants forced to endure degrading conditions, including mould, cockroaches and mice; and

"Whereas the cost of ignoring the plight of our poorly housed and homeless neighbours affects all citizens of Ontario through increased health costs, emergency shelter costs and other public expenditures;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure there is a major allocation of funding for affordable and supportive housing in Ontario's 2007 provincial budget, with a commitment to release this funding quickly; and

"To urge the government of Ontario to reassume financial responsibility for the cost and repair of the current social housing stock which was downloaded onto municipalities" by the federal government "who cannot afford repair and upkeep costs."

I'm pleased to sign this and present it to the Legislative Assembly.

1530

CORMORANTS

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recent scientific studies have conclusively demonstrated that double-crested cormorants consume more fish than commercial fishing, sport fishing and poaching combined;

"Whereas double-crested cormorants are devastating nesting areas for other birds;

"Whereas double-crested cormorants are fouling water and making beaches unusable;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the private member's Bill 156 of Ernie Parsons, MPP Prince Edward-Hastings, to reclassify the double-crested cormorant into the same family as American crows, brown-headed cowbirds and the common grackle. This will allow for greatly increased opportunities for the culling of cormorants, in addition to other steps being taken to control cormorant populations and protect the environment."

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have here a petition that I want to present on behalf of the residents, families and staff of peopleCare in Tavistock. I thank them for going to all the trouble of signing this petition, recognizing, of course, that this was intended to convince the government that the budget needed money for long-term care and so it is somewhat redundant to read it. But I will read it into the record on their behalf just the same.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I affix my signature on behalf of my constituents, as I agree with this petition.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition on long-term care. It comes from Tina Bravos, the executive director for Fosterbrooke Long-Term Care in Newcastle; Patrick Brown, the administrator of Strathaven Lifecare Centre in Bowmanville; Heather Cooper, administrator, and John Dodds, president of the residents' council of the Community Nursing Home, Port Perry.

The petition has been read many times, but just to summarize, I'll read the "whereases":

"Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act"—Bill 140, which will be debated today in the Legislature;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I'm please to present this to page Alistair from the riding of Markham.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 122,000 households across Ontario are on waiting lists for affordable housing, enduring wait times of five to 10 years;

"Whereas housing affordability problems are worsening in Ontario, with one tenant household in five paying at least 50% of its income on rent, and almost 65,000 facing eviction in 2005 because they couldn't afford to pay their rent;

"Whereas Ontario's current social housing stock is increasingly rundown, with tenants forced to endure degrading conditions, including mould, cockroaches and mice; and

"Whereas the cost of ignoring the plight of our poorly housed and homeless neighbours affects all citizens of Ontario through increased health costs, emergency shelter costs and other public expenditures;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure there is a major allocation of funding for affordable and supportive housing in Ontario's 2007 provincial budget, with a commitment to release this funding quickly; and

"To urge the government of Ontario to reassume financial responsibility for the cost and repair of the current social housing stock which was downloaded onto municipalities, who cannot afford repair and upkeep costs."

I've signed this petition. I want to thank Don Lindsay of Wasaga Beach for sending it to me.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to standing order 55, I rise to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

Monday, April 2, 2007, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 187, the budget bill; in the evening, second reading of Bill 171, Health System Improvements Act. That's a good one.

Tuesday, April 3, 2007, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 103, Independent Police Review Act; in the evening, second reading of Bill 184, Endangered Species Act.

Wednesday, April 4, 2007, in the afternoon, PC opposition day; on Wednesday evening, second reading of Bill 187, the budget bill. That's a really good one, Speaker.

Thursday, April 5, 2007, in the afternoon, budget motion.

C'est tout.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Thank you. Perhaps you could give a copy of that to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LES FOYERS DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Mr. Smitherman moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act respecting long-term care homes /
Projet de loi 140, Loi concernant les foyers de soins de
longue durée.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time today with the member from Nipissing. I would like to share not just my time but I'd like to share my very sincere thanks, for it has been her dedicated efforts over three and a half years here that have seen us move to the point today when we're able to bring back to the House an improved Bill 140, a bill that is a very important, substantial improvement for those living in long-term-care homes. My hat is off to the member from Nipissing.

I enjoyed the great privilege this past Saturday of experiencing a spring day in North Bay. That meant very considerable amounts of snow accumulation and cold winds, but none of that was enough to cool down the hearts of the great people of Nipissing and North Bay who were there to extend their arms and shovels to turn the sod—not sod, really—but to turn the dirt to build a new \$300-million hospital for the good people of North Bay and Nipissing. That is another example of the kind of effort that the member from Nipissing has been involved in leading, not to mention the new hospital already under way in Mattawa. My hat is off to her. I wish I could deliver the goods for my riding in a similar way.

I'm very pleased to speak about our government's proposed Long-Term Care Homes Act. People will know that when our government came to office, there were circumstances in common report in the media of the day that indicated the extent to which there was neglectful care occurring in our long-term-care homes.

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At the heart of it, this bill says that there is no circumstance where neglect shall be tolerated. We've taken serious steps—even before this bill—to ensure that our residents, some of the most vulnerable people in the province of Ontario, living in our more than 600 long-term-care homes, receive the kind of care that gives life and expression to the use of the word “home” itself.

Our government has worked hard to improve long-term-care homes, not just for the residents and to give comfort to the families but also to enhance the quality of the circumstances for those who work on the front line. We do, of course, owe a debt of gratitude to all of those who work in health care. Across Ontario today, something like 300,000 people, women and men dedicated to patients, will take their places on the front line and will seek to give good, quality care in our public health care system.

But we know that there was important work to do, as always, to enhance the quality of care that's available. As legislators, the responsibility falls to us to stand up for those who are most vulnerable in our communities, in keeping with the theme that was expressed so profoundly in our government's budget of one week ago today, when we reached out to continue to build on those areas that had been so sorely disappointed by the leadership that came from the party that preceded us.

Back on January 2, 2004, our government launched our long-term-care consultation and action plan. Extensive consultation was undertaken to identify areas of improvement. Just to take people back for a short historical ride, in January 2004 our party was but two or three months into the privilege of serving. I was a relatively fresh-faced minister at the time—I say “relatively”—and the member for Nipissing, my parliamentary assistant, really dove into the work at hand with productive abandon, all of it motivated by a strenuous desire to give better and more consistent quality of care and support to our loved ones who are depending upon long-term care.

That consultation led to Monique Smith's report in May 2004, Commitment to Care: A Plan for Long-Term Care in Ontario, and I want to compliment the member for the work she did. I had the chance to visit, on an unannounced basis, several long-term-care homes in the province, but the member spent so much time in long-term-care homes that we were really afraid that she was at risk of being a candidate for admission, not on any demographic basis but just on the fact that she was such a frequent visitor in those environments.

In drafting the proposed legislation, we had the tremendous advantage of a lot of input from Ontarians with a variety of perspectives, numbering 700. The advice

they gave in response to the report, especially in response to the future directions for legislation aspect of it, really helped to inform the way that we've gone forward.

The plan has guided our efforts to improve and restore confidence in the province's long-term-care homes system, and we've remained committed to openness and accountability as important principles of that. Now, some have come to suggest that if you seek to make sure that the actions that are to be provided are being provided and you require people to provide evidentiary basis of that—some people will complain about paperwork burdens. But we must be mindful always to balance these challenges out. Yes, of course we want to dedicate all the time we have available to front-line care. We understand that our front-line health care workers must be involved in providing that care. But it's crucial as well for the purposes of research and accountability that we are measuring the work we're involved in; that for the purposes of making sure our seniors are safe, as an example, from the challenges related to medication, distribution and the potential errors, all of the paperwork is appropriate to enhance the quality of care.

At the heart of it, what we sought to do was to develop the idea that a long-term-care home must be a home. We have not been entirely successful in expunging the word "facility" from the vernacular of health care providers, but we have made progress. I really want to give appropriate consideration and thanks to a lot of those who are advocates, a lot of family members and a lot of people from the community who express such considerable love and support for the work and for the residents that they have helped to strengthen this concept and this culture of home. But we have more work to do on this front.

Our revolution in long-term care is rooted in this principle. We want to move from the idea that that long-term care is a facility to home. We want to do all that we can to support our seniors to experience that: from a cultural standpoint, from a religious standpoint, from a dietary standpoint. We have a lot of potential in our province to evolve our long-term-care home sector in a fashion that really does reflect the diversity—this beautiful, fantastic, enriching diversity—which is the heart of Ontario's strength.

We want to thank the members of the legislative committee and the members from the public who participated in the consideration of this bill. The bill was here in Toronto, and it travelled to Kingston and to Sudbury and to London. We listened at committee, and we were able to reaffirm our government's support for the non-profit sector. This is an important element that's written right into the bill. The addition of the establishment of staffing and care standards—that's important work that we're undertaking at present.

We'll be engaging a tremendous range of stakeholders as we seek to move Ontario into a direction that is sophisticated enough to acknowledge, on the one hand, that not all of our residents are the same, that if Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Smith are experiencing different circumstances, we are sophisticated enough to tailor our care in

a fashion which addresses their direct needs; not in suggesting, as some do, that they are widgets, that they all have identical needs and that they should all have identical amounts of time directed to them. We believe, fundamentally, that it's our obligation to amass as much support as possible and to allow those on the front lines to be more involved in helping to direct that care, with an understanding which they have uniquely. They're uniquely qualified to do it because they know these patients. Part of what we'll do to embed that principle even further is make sure that upon admission to a long-term-care home, we have a really good understanding of the health circumstances that the individual is experiencing.

We're moving with respect to licence terms. It's a fundamental component of the bill, and we sought at committee to amend it in a fashion based on the advice that we received from organizations like the Ontario Long Term Care Association and others. But at the heart of it, what we've attempted to impress upon these individuals is that a licensing regime is a matter of accountability for the government as well. No longer shall we operate in an environment where we can pretend our way through things. We will have to be very, very forthright in our dealings with long-term-care homes about where the future lies for them, particularly as those homes become a little bit older.

On this point, I fully acknowledge the necessity of creating a program that will see enhanced renewal of our older homes in the province. We've noted very, very clearly the need for such a program. I've been clear in communicating more recently with the leadership from the Ontario Long Term Care Association about the desire that we're involved in, in helping to develop a model which is at the same time reflective of the need to re-develop the C and the D homes, but also to acknowledge that in our province of Ontario we have a lot of these homes out there in more rural parts of our province where they are such essential parts of the fabric of community. We want to make sure as we develop programs that we're particularly attuned to the necessity of a model that works for a home that doesn't have 125 or 130 beds.

I've had the chance in the last number of months, with several colleagues who are here, to visit long-term-care homes in communities like Zurich and Milverton and to be able to see, in one case, redevelopment ongoing, and in another, to be able to commit to a model that will work for redevelopment for those scales of homes. I think that's so essential. We believe, fundamentally as a government, that the best health care you can find is the health care that you find as close to home as possible. Accordingly, we want to work with all of these sectors to develop redevelopment policies that work well, no matter whether you're in a big city like Toronto or in a smaller town like some of those that I mentioned.

We have worked to reduce some of the reporting requirements, in keeping with the concern about a burden of paperwork. But back to this issue a bit more about the staffing and care standard. I've spoken prior about the dedication of our front-line health care workers. We're so

grateful for not just care but love: love. I like so much the privilege of my work because I get to talk about the love that so many are delivering—volunteers, in so many fashions, and also our front-line health care workers.

When we had a chance at committing to fulfill a commitment that we made to reinstate staffing and care standards, I'm proud to say we fulfilled that, with support and encouragement from the New Democratic Party and from others. Unfortunately, the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party did not see it as appropriate to support a return to staffing and care standards, something that they wiped out in a vigorous way during the earliest days of their dark eight-and-a-half-year reign—a reign of health care terror.

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I'm proud of the progress that we've made, as well, in creating more opportunities for people to be employed in long-term care. There is in health care, on lots of occasions, more that can be done, but we must acknowledge that there are almost 5,000 more people working today in the provision of care to our loved ones in long-term care—4,891 additional bodies as delivery agents for care—as a result of a very generous funding initiative that the Minister of Finance has supported.

Through the course of the next several months, we'll be announcing a significant contribution of additional registered practical nurse care in our long-term-care home environments. We have a lot of registered practical nurses who are graduating from very qualified programs. They're not meeting with all the opportunities that they should, and we're going to put a whole bunch of them to work in our long-term-care sector.

I've spoken about the licensing requirements and the legislative framework that supports long-term-care home renewal. It's about having the appropriate rules in place, as well, to protect our people and promote a zero tolerance policy for abuse and neglect, as I've spoken about. If anyone in a long-term-care home environment is experiencing a circumstance where they think the care is neglectful, they have an obligation. It's a duty. It's placed upon all of us, and we have established through our 1-800 action line a very capable capacity to respond.

We ensure an enhanced and more clearly enforceable residents' bill of rights, stronger and more consistent reporting requirements and stronger and more consistent inspection and enforcement. I want to note that this piece of legislation gives the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care the means to promote a policy of zero tolerance for abuse and neglect. For instance, it holds people responsible, accountable. Operators must operate a safe home and provide effective care. They must provide direct and immediate action in response to any cause for concern around neglect and abuse and ensure faster, targeted enforcement in response to resident complaints.

I want to start to wind down here by saying some thank-yous. I especially want to say thank you to all those who contribute to care and long-term care. I hope that I've done that well, but I'm so mindful, as I travel around, that it really is community coming together in the

form of volunteers and front-line health care workers and the families of residents all contributing something to the quality and to the environment that we're able to create. I've seen some fantastic ones.

There were those who said it wasn't possible to bring forward a consolidated piece of legislation. We have done that. We've done so through the good, hard efforts of many in my ministry; I can't name them all. But I want to again acknowledge the work of my parliamentary assistant, Monique Smith, the member for Nipissing. She's poured her heart and soul into this work. As a result, as we bring forward for third reading debate today Bill 140, the residents in long-term care in the province of Ontario can be assured that stronger protections and a better framework that will enhance the quality of care they receive is what this bill is all about. This will pave the way for the long-term-care sector to evolve even more forcefully as it moves forward as one of those most important providers we have in our whole public health care landscape. This will be pivotal in ensuring that some of our most vulnerable citizens—something like more than 75,000, experiencing an average age of at least 83 years of age, people from every walk of life, every nook and cranny of this fantastic and vast province, are there, and they need care.

We're privileged to be able to provide it and I'm privileged today to be able to lead off the debate on third reading of Bill 140. I will be voting for this bill and I recommend it to others.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Nipissing.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I too will be voting in favour of this bill. I'd like to thank the minister for his kind words and opening remarks on this the third reading of Bill 140.

As the minister noted, we spent a very cold day in North Bay on Saturday. I have to say that for three and a half years I worked hard to get shovels in the ground on my hospital in North Bay. I've worked three and a half years to get this bill to this stage, and I'm delighted to be here today as we debate third reading. Certainly I wouldn't be here today without a huge team and a huge effort on behalf of so many in the ministry who have worked so hard. There were many people who said we wouldn't get a consolidated bill together and that this has been talked about for some 20 years. So I'm delighted that I'm joined here today in the Legislature by a good many of the leg. team and Michelle Rossi from my staff. So many of these people have given so many hours, so I would hope the members of the House would join me in thanking them for all the work they've done on behalf of all of our seniors across the province. Thank you to the team.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, as well as the member for Oshawa, who joined us for a bit of our travels, for the kind attention and certainly the vast amount of energy that they've put into this bill as well. I think it was really a group effort on the

road that improved Bill 140 and that has brought it here today as really a wonderful piece of legislation that will protect our seniors for years to come.

As the minister noted, we took this bill on the road. We were in Toronto for two days. We travelled to Kingston, Sudbury and London. We heard from a wide variety of people. We heard from family members, from long-term-care home operators, from front-line workers, including dietary staff, nursing staff and personal support workers, and we heard from residents. We had the privilege of hearing from some resident council members, some family council members, so many people who were involved in the day-to-day lives of our seniors in our long-term-care homes, and we took very much from what they had to say. We had the opportunity to join again at the end of January as a committee to review hundreds of amendments that were put forward, many of which were accepted by the committee and are now part of this third reading debate on Bill 140.

I just want to go through some of the recommendations and some of the amendments that we made to the bill that I think have improved the bill and that I think are really demonstrative of the ability of this government to listen, to hear what the front-line workers, those people who are involved in the day-to-day operations of our long-term-care homes, had to say, and to take their advice and really improve our long-term-care legislation.

In the preamble, we included a provision that would require mutual respect among residents in our homes. Because these homes are homes for many, and many of their families are involved and many of their friends come and visit and we have so many of the community, we hope, involved in our homes, we felt it was important that we put in that concept of mutual respect.

We supported the delivery of long-term-care services by the not-for-profit sector, a nod to that sector that does such great work in our long-term-care homes across the province.

We recognized that the safety of residents is a key consideration in meeting our residents' needs, and we recognized the importance of an environment that supports continuous quality improvement in our long-term-care sector across the province.

We enhanced the fundamental principle in our legislation. While still focusing on the concept that a long-term-care home is primarily the home of its residents, it is the place where the physical, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual needs of each of its residents are adequately met. We felt it was important to include in the fundamental principle that description of what is provided for our residents in our long-term-care homes across the province.

We expanded our bill of rights at the behest of some of our advocates to include the right to have a family member, a friend or a person of importance to the resident attend meetings with the resident and licensees or staff of the home to give them that support and that extra comfort when they have those meetings.

In our plan of care, we changed it to clarify that the plan must be in writing and that it includes nutritional

care, as well as a number of other provisions of care that are already in the legislation, and we extended the frequency of revisions to at least every six months.

As the minister noted, we included a staffing and care standard provision. There was much talk about this at the hearings. Many, many front-line workers came to speak to us about the need for this, the need for a standard that had been removed by the previous government. We listened to those discussions. There still remains much discussion to be had. There's no consensus on what should be included in that standard, and so we are engaging the stakeholders now in a discussion on what should be included in that standard, what services should be included.

On reporting on restraints of residents, the licensees are now required to keep records relating to restraints, but they are not required to submit them to the director. They're also not required to report on the use of environmental restraints, or, as we call them, a secure unit in the home. This was in order to address some of the concerns that were raised around paperwork and an increase in paperwork. We wanted to make sure that our front-line workers have as much time as possible to provide the services that they are there to provide to our long-term-care residents across the province. We heard some of the concerns around paperwork and endeavoured in really a great way to reduce the amount of paperwork but still ensure that we have those safeguards in place for our residents.

We respected the autonomy of residents by specifying that only residents may sit on our residents' councils, and of course we've enshrined residents' councils and family councils in our legislation.

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We heard a great deal, particularly from the not-for-profit sector, about the duties of directors and the penalties attached to directors. We changed the requirements for board members, directors and officers to make them more consistent with the obligations placed on those individuals who serve, particularly, on public hospital boards, and we reduced the penalties for individuals who are on boards of not-for-profit homes as well as municipal and First Nations homes. We've also removed the possibility of imprisonment for conviction of any offence under these sections for any board member, director or officer.

With respect to volunteers, you've heard me speak on a number of occasions in this Legislature—and I've spoken about it a great deal on the road—about the importance of our volunteer programs in our long-term-care homes and just how important it is to have community members involved in the lives of our residents and involved in the day-to-day operation of our long-term-care homes. We've replaced the requirement for training of volunteers with a requirement for orientation. We think it's very important for all of our volunteers in our homes to know about certain policies and procedures in the homes, but we didn't want to make it too onerous on our homes, so we have an orientation for our volunteers.

With respect to our satisfaction surveys, which we've entrenched in the legislation as being required in our homes and which we think are very important for getting feedback from our residents and our family members for the continued improvement and betterment of our homes across the province, we now require that they be done but that they just be kept in the home and not sent to the director. Again, this is a reduction in the administrative workload for our homes, but it ensures that they are still done and available for the annual inspection when the compliance adviser is in the home.

We've provided for temporary emergency licences in order to address some issues that come up in our homes from time to time or in certain areas from time to time, where we need temporary emergency licences.

We've added a right to appeal from orders made to municipalities. This was a concern raised by AMO. They wanted the ability to appeal any orders that are made with respect to renovations, additions and alterations, and we've placed that ability to appeal now in the legislation.

We've ensured in our legislation, through the amendments that we've introduced at second reading, that the homes must be inspected once a year. We have not allowed for any exemptions from this, but we have, as a quid pro quo, also enabled the director to be able to recognize long-term-care homes with a record of excellence in compliance. So we're working with the sector and we've asked for input from various stakeholders on how to acknowledge our homes. We have so many fabulous homes out there that are providing great service in a variety of communities, from very small communities like Deep River, where I visited a home which provided a spectacular home-like environment to its residents, to larger homes like the Yee Hong centres here in Toronto and Mississauga, which are providing a culturally specific, lovely environment for our Chinese seniors and our southeast Asian seniors in the greater Toronto area. We want to be able to have a way to recognize those homes that have very few compliance issues and that are providing top-quality care to our residents across the province.

We've provided in our legislation a requirement for public consultation on any proposed initial regulations. We recognize, as many indicated in the hearings and as my colleagues across the way have indicated, that oftentimes the devil is in the details, and we certainly recognize that there will be lots of work going into the drafting of regulations that support this legislation, so we wanted to provide the public with an opportunity to have input into those regulations.

As my colleague the minister also said, we've addressed some of the concerns around term licences, and we're looking at, longer term, how we are going to redevelop our B and C homes, as so many people called for during the legislative hearings. This, of course, is a question more of a budgetary nature and not of a legislative nature, but we did provide for longer terms in order to allow governments to provide for those changes that are required over time.

As you are aware, this legislation has a policy to promote zero tolerance in order to prevent abuse and neglect of our residents. It has a comprehensive and detailed least-restraint policy to minimize the use of restraints in our homes. It allows for the establishment of an Office of the Long-Term Care Homes Resident and Family Adviser to provide information and to assist our residents, their families and others who are concerned about our long-term-care sector. It has protections in place and due process rights for persons who are incapable of consenting to admission or a transfer to a secure unit in a long-term-care home. They now have their rights protected and will be provided with rights advice. We have included an enhanced and more clearly enforceable residents' bill of rights that really addresses the rights that we believe every resident should have in our long-term-care homes.

We've strengthened our reporting requirements, and we've strengthened our requirements related to the development of an integrated, interdisciplinary plan of care for every resident. This is so important, because there are so many people involved in the day-to-day care of our residents. We think it is absolutely essential that everyone involved in the care of the residents—the personal support workers, the nurses, the director of nursing, the social workers, the activities coordinators—be involved in the interdisciplinary plan of care for each and every resident so we are meeting the needs of the residents in a very particular way.

We've substantively reformed and strengthened the inspection, compliance and enforcement system to ensure that we have faster, targeted enforcement in response to any complaints or concerns that are raised with respect to a particular home. We have a continuing requirement for our southern municipalities to operate their long-term-care homes, and we have a licensing system for our long-term-care homes that I believe will provide us with the tools we need to do some long-term planning in the long-term-care sector, which was much lacking and noted in various Auditor General reports. We believe it's important that those tools be there for the government, for our LHINs in the future, to be able to plan and determine where the needs are and to ensure that we have the appropriate care for our residents on the spectrum of care, so not just for our residents but for all our seniors across the province. Whether it's appropriate for them to be aging at home or in a long-term-care home, we want to make sure that we have those appropriate supports in the community where they are needed. We believe that our licensing scheme has allowed us the flexibility and the tools to enable us to address that.

I want to take this opportunity to thank once again, as did the minister, all those people who were involved in our hearings, who came out to provide us with their input, to provide us, in some cases, with some really heartfelt insights into the care that is given in long-term-care homes. We heard from some front-line service providers—our nurses, our personal support workers, dietary care workers—who really put their heart and soul

into the day-to-day running of the long-term-care homes. We heard from some operators across the province who do the same. Their heart and soul is in the operation of their home and they are really there, providing service to our long-term-care residents. To all of them, I want to say thank you.

I also want to join the minister in thanking all our front-line workers, who do such a great service for our over 75,000 long-term-care residents across the province.

Finally, I want to end by again thanking the team, who were so great, who provided so much help, so much work over the last two and a half, three years. Not everyone is here; we've had some people come and go on our team, but we've got a core that's still with us. So thank you all again for being here.

And thank you to the member for Kitchener-Waterloo and the member for Nickel Belt, because certainly the last two days of clause-by-clause were a challenge. We got through it, I think in the best way, and demonstrated really the best way that this place, this Parliament, can work. So I want to thank everyone who participated.

And thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to speak in support of third reading of Bill 140.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal): Questions and comments? The member from Waterloo-Wellington.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair.

I'm pleased to have a chance to respond briefly to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and his parliamentary assistant, who made a presentation this afternoon explaining the government's position on Bill 140. I was present for most of the speech, but what I didn't hear was an explanation of why the long-term-care sector was so dramatically ignored in the most recent budget.

As we know, the long-term-care sector had lobbied I think all members of the Legislature. I certainly received information from long-term-care homes in our area—from Leisureworld and Chateau Gardens, both in Elmira, from the Westmount in Kitchener, from Royal Terrace in Palmerston, and others—all of which are excellent operators of fine nursing homes in Waterloo-Wellington.

I was very disappointed that the response of the government to the lobbying effort, the explanation as to what was needed to ensure that seniors in our communities receive the standard of care they deserve and which this government promised in the election in 2003, was not forthcoming in the provincial budget.

As we know, there was a small amount of additional money—I think \$14 million—allocated to the long-term-care sector. It's my understanding that the long-term-care sector has indicated that it's enough to provide one minute of additional care per day per resident, which is clearly insufficient and represents yet another broken McGuinty Liberal government promise.

I'm disappointed that neither speaker made reference to this and never even made an effort to explain why their budget was so remiss in its approach to the long-term-care sector. I hope that as the debate on third reading of this bill unfolds we will hear some explanation from

some of the other government members. I look forward to hearing the speech that's coming up from our deputy leader and critic for health and long-term care, Elizabeth Witmer, the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, who's coming up next. I'm sure she'll give the House a good deal of feedback on this bill.

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Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Let me just make a couple of comments in response to the comments that were made by the parliamentary assistant. I want to echo her thanks for the work that was done by the ministry staff during the bill itself and the days we spent on the road and during clause-by-clause, but also the work that went into the bill before that happened. I appreciated very much that they were prepared to answer questions from all members, from all sides, who had concerns and who had questions about the bill.

Secondly, I want to mention Ralph Armstrong, legislative counsel, who did yeoman's service, especially in light of the very limited time we had between the end of the public hearings and the start of the clause-by-clause. That he was still standing after some 300 amendments was a remarkable feat in itself. I really appreciate the work he did.

Also, the two days during which we did the clause-by-clause, for eight hours the first day and close to eight hours the second, was a lot of work on behalf of all three parties, and the three of us in particular who led that for our own parties, who hung in there for the whole time. I did appreciate that we got it through and got it done with, I think, a minimal amount of bickering and arguing and partisanship.

Having said that, the parliamentary assistant will not be surprised that we will not be supporting this bill. In the time I have, which probably won't start this afternoon—or maybe I'll get into a bit of it—I will be continuing to express the very serious concerns I have with respect to the inability of the government to meet the promise it made with respect to standards of care, the fact that we don't have an ombudsman who will look after long-term care, the fact that I think we really missed an opportunity to put not-for-profit long-term care out at the forefront—and that opportunity has been missed—and some other concerns that I hope I might get to today.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I want to begin by thanking the member for North Bay, I think on behalf of all of us here today. The member for North Bay has done an incredible amount of work on long-term care. From pretty much the day she got here, she was assigned a very difficult task of consulting with stakeholders, consulting with seniors, with residents, with the people of Ontario. She's travelled from one end of the province to the other, looking at and touring facilities, getting to know this file probably better than any of us here know this file. I want to thank her for the leadership she's shown on this, because her leadership is quite clearly a very important part of what we're looking at here in this bill.

So to the member from North Bay, thank you for the great work you've put into this. I'm sure the people of

North Bay appreciate the work you've done, and I can assure you that your colleagues here in this Legislature, probably from both sides of the House, respect and appreciate the hard work you've put into this. I'm sure the people of Ontario, in particular those seniors we're serving in these homes, are very much going to appreciate the higher level of quality of care that's going to be seen throughout the province because of the good work that you've put into this.

This bill will be a cornerstone of our strategy to improve and strengthen care for the residents of our long-term-care homes. There will be improvements made to the licensing and capital renewal areas, which is very, very important to homes right across the province. And for the first time we're going to make a little more sense in where we invest these dollars, that areas that currently have a surplus of homes will probably see less of it and areas that require expansion will be able to get more of those dollars.

I think this legislation is a very important step forward and I again commend the member from North Bay for the great work she's put into this.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I am pleased to respond to the comments made by the Minister of Health and by the parliamentary assistant. I would certainly echo the comments that have already been made about the fact that the staff did an outstanding job. It was a huge bill and there was a lot of work to do in preparation. I know that there was a huge number of amendments. I don't think I've ever been part of a bill that had so many amendments, and the truth is, I think all three parties did work very well. We had two days to get those amendments through, and I think people were committed to the task of doing so and yet making sure that the amendments that were being put forward were duly debated and discussed.

Having said that, at the end of the day there were many, many people who had made presentations throughout the province of Ontario, and I was really quite pleased at the number of people who stepped up to the plate. We heard from people on the front lines, doing all sorts of jobs within the long-term-care sector; we heard from a lot of the residents' families; we certainly heard from the owners, the operators; and we heard from municipalities that have homes. The input was certainly widespread.

I would hasten to add that I think that at the end of the day there was a lot of disappointment because, despite the fact that there were changes made, many of them dealing with the issue of enforcement, the government had not lived up to its promise, and still has not lived up to its promise, in its budget that it was going to increase the level of funding for the residents in order that there could be more personal, hands-on care, whether it be in the area of nursing or feeding or toileting—some of what needs to be done in order to make sure that the residents in the long-term-care sector get the highest and best level of care that they possibly can. So I think there's still a lot of disappointment, and there wasn't any capital renewal plan either.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes the member for Nipissing in response.

Ms. Smith: I want to thank the members from Waterloo–Wellington, Nickel Belt, Scarborough Centre and Kitchener–Waterloo for their kind comments today.

I do want to join with the member for Nickel Belt in acknowledging Ralph Armstrong. I think he did yeoman's service, and the fact that he was still standing at the end of it all was incredible. So hats off to him for getting us through the clause-by-clause craziness of the week; so thank you to him.

I want to thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo and the member for Nickel Belt for, again, acknowledging the staff at the ministry. I think they did such a great job, and the fact that all three parties are in agreement and appreciate that good work is really a testament to the team and to all that they did, so I want to thank them.

I would be incredibly remiss if I didn't thank one of my colleagues, Louise Edmonds, who did yeoman's service with me from the very beginning on this file, writing Commitment to Care with me, travelling to all the long-term-care homes that we did together and providing a huge amount of support to this project. I just wanted to put that on the record because she has been tireless on this file and in her quest to improve the quality of life for our seniors across the province.

I do acknowledge some of the comments that were made by the member for Waterloo–Wellington. I would just like to remind him that we have over the last three and a half years invested in new staff in all of our homes across the province, including the hiring of over 4,800 new direct care staff, including 1,100 new nurses. We've seen the return of minimum standards, which the previous government had removed, including the minimum standard of at least two baths or showers per week, that all food menus be approved by a registered dietitian, and that we have a registered nurse on hand 24/7.

Finally, before I give up my time, I do want to thank again the two critics for the patience and the professionalism they showed. I think, to the member for Nickel Belt, our dads would be proud.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Witmer: I'm pleased to join the third reading debate on Bill 140, An Act respecting long-term care homes, which was introduced on October 3, 2006. This bill—again, I just want to review it. It consolidates three existing pieces of legislation—the Nursing Homes Act, the Charitable Institutions Act, and the Homes for the Aged and Rest Homes Act—into one single act. Certainly, that is a very good thing.

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However, having said that, I think at the end of the day this bill has failed to respond to the needs and some of the issues that had been identified by the residents, by the families of the residents and certainly by the front-line workers. Although there were some amendments made, I think based upon the input and the huge number of people who not only made oral presentations but also

came to us with written presentations, the bill at the end of the day failed to make the changes that did respond to the requests that had been made.

In fact, if you take a look at this bill, in many respects we don't see much of a vision on the part of this government at a time when the health needs of our seniors and the number of seniors in this province are escalating. We know that our senior population, those over the age of 75, is going to grow. We had about 776,000 in 2006, and by 2016 we're going to have almost one million people over the age of 75.

We are going to have to take a look at how we can appropriately plan for the care of those seniors. Although many of them hopefully will be able to remain in their own homes if we can ensure we have proper home care support in place, inevitably there are going to be some of these people who are over the age of 75, and sometimes much younger, who are going to require long-term-care support. They will be living in residences, and obviously the number of beds that are available today are not going to suffice. This government has not put in place any long-term-care plan to respond to the future needs of those residents. I'm going to speak about that a little bit more in the future.

Not only do we not have a plan for new beds for the increasing numbers, we don't have a plan for renewal of the older beds as well, the B and C beds of which there are about 35,000, almost half of the beds in Ontario.

I think in this respect this bill certainly doesn't demonstrate any vision as to responding to the needs of the senior population in Ontario, those who are frail, those who are vulnerable. Obviously, we need to make sure we have the resident space available, that within those homes we have innovative programs, we have services that can respond to needs. This bill doesn't speak to that at all.

This bill also didn't address the promise that had been made by Premier Dalton McGuinty in 2003. He promised each resident \$6,000 for an additional 20 minutes of personal care, and unfortunately we haven't seen that money provided. We were told during the debate on Bill 140 that we should keep focused on the budget, because this bill wasn't going to provide the funding but perhaps there'd be something in the budget. We haven't seen any commitment, and as a result we have another broken Premier McGuinty promise. In breaking that promise, I would say to you that the trust of many of the citizens in this province has been betrayed.

I'm going to speak a little later about the campaign that's taken place since the passage of the amendments to Bill 140, when so many seniors had been asking for that additional care and for a capital renewal plan. We just have to recognize that these older people, about 75,000 residents in this province, are frail and they are vulnerable. They need help with feeding, they need help with dressing and they need help with toileting. Currently the amount of time available to help those individuals is simply not sufficient.

I was quite struck during the hearings to listen to the front-line workers, to hear the stress and the compassion

they felt for the older residents and the fact that they were not able to provide them with the quality time that was needed to provide them with the best quality of life. They would tell us that what they could do for these people makes such a huge difference in the lives of these men and women, and they stressed the fact that if they had received money that would allow them to provide the full additional 20 minutes of care, it would certainly help these residents lead a healthier, happier and less stressful life. We know that in some instances in the homes throughout the province of Ontario, family members are going in to provide some of the care that the stressed, overworked staff is not able to provide today without additional money to do so.

This bill failed to address that issue. Indeed, in some instances, some of the new regulations and the enforcement measures actually mean that people are going to be taken away from front-line personal care and will be doing more paperwork. We need to keep that in mind.

If you take a look at the budget, it totally failed to meet the needs of the residents. Yet on Tuesday, January 23, 2007, the member from Nipissing said in committee, "Certainly we recognize that long-term care is a work in progress, and while this is legislation, we know that there are funding issues. We've heard from a lot of presenters, and I'll certainly make sure the Minister of Finance hears your point of view on this as we continue our budget deliberations."

Do you know what? I have no doubt that the member from Nipissing did make representation to the Minister of Finance. I know that she certainly does care about these individuals and I appreciate the work that she has done. However, obviously the Minister of Finance, together with the Premier of this province, did not see these residents, these seniors, as a priority for this government, because the money that had been promised, the additional \$6,000 per resident, was not forthcoming. Obviously, the Premier did not respond to the pleas for additional funding which were made to him by the member from Nipissing.

The government has chosen to ignore the needs of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens. The only support that they got in the budget was 50 cents additional per resident per day, or a mere one minute of additional care per resident. That's a far cry from the 20 minutes that were promised.

This also means—and we were told this by people in the long-term-care sector—that there will probably be some layoffs. There are going to be even fewer staff available to support these residents, and they are going to have fewer caregivers to assist them with their daily activities, such as bathing, dressing, eating—the simple basics. The needs of these residents go far beyond that. Regrettably, there wasn't anything in the budget, as we were led to believe there well may be.

I'll tell you, the residents, the staff, the people involved are concerned. After the budget, the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors put out a press release on March 22 of this year.

They headlined it "Liberals Break Promise to 75,000 Residents of Long-Term-Care Homes." This is what they go on to say: "With virtually nothing in the provincial budget for long-term care, the McGuinty government will be headed into the next election without having fulfilled its pledge to the 75,000 seniors who live in these homes."

Then Donna Rubin, the CEO of the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, a very dedicated and hard-working individual, says, "For long-term care, the cupboard is bare."

"Unless the Liberals have a sudden conversion on the way to the polls on October 10, they will have to explain another broken promise—a promise made to long-term-care residents and their families across this province."

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The press release goes on to say, "During the last election campaign, the Liberals pledged a \$6,000 increase in annual care funding for every long-term-care resident. But after four"—and I repeat, four—"provincial budgets, the funding increase has totalled only about \$2,300."

"For the McGuinty government to deliver on its promise, it will have to inject an additional \$277 million into the operating budgets of long-term-care homes over the next six months." And we know that in this budget, they only gave them \$14 million.

"In the lead-up to the last election, the Liberals identified increased funding for long-term care—funding that would go directly to improving the level of care of residents—as one of their top priorities. Today, they failed to keep their word. This is a huge disappointment, especially after the Liberals promised after coming to power that they would lead a revolution in long-term care," stated Rubin.

"While the budget contained \$14 million for the hiring of nurses in long-term care, the reality is that with no money to keep up with inflation, homes will be forced to lay off staff. 'Homes have been given about 50 cents a day more to hire new nurses, but we needed over \$2 a day just to keep the ones we have. We will be laying off three nurses to hire one,' said Rubin.

"For years, OANHSS has been urging the province to put more money into the care and services that directly benefit residents so that some of their most basic needs are being met in a timely manner. And with increasing public attention focused on the sector—including the Casa Verde inquest, media stories about homes and staff being stretched to the limit, growing awareness about the inadequate funding provided to feed residents (currently \$5.46 per day per resident)—there was an expectation that the Liberal government would really take action on these issues."

"We thought they got it, that they understood how impossible the situation has become," said Rubin. "But their lack of response suggests otherwise."

"Unable to improve care levels for residents because of inadequate funding, homes are now facing a further financial squeeze as the Liberal government moves to enact the Long-Term Care Homes Act. Bill 140 will

place a whole new set of regulatory demands on the sector without providing the financial means to meet them.

"This will result in even more staff time being devoted to non-care functions. And ultimately that means residents end up getting short-changed by government," Rubin stated.

"Homes are being swamped by increased costs, new regulatory requirements and lack of adequate funding. Operating costs are rising—everything from utility to wage rates are up. Government continues to demand more. Yet funding falls further behind."

Donna concludes by saying, "Sadly, this budget will mean layoffs and service cuts."

I think that pretty well summarizes the impact of Bill 140, the position of this government in its total disregard in responding to the needs of those who live in long-term-care homes.

This is from an organization, by the way, OANHSS, that is a provincial association. It represents not-for-profit providers of long-term-care services and housing for seniors. The people who are part of OANHSS include municipal and charitable long-term-care homes, non-profit nursing homes, seniors' housing projects and community service agencies. These people together operate over 27,000 long-term-care beds and over 5,000 seniors' housing units across the province.

So I would remind the Premier: You made a promise to long-term-care residents in 2003. You said, "We will build a seniors strategy that guarantees our seniors be treated with respect and dignity." I would say to the Premier, and certainly it's reflected in the press release put out by OANHSS, you have failed in your promise to treat the seniors with respect and dignity. You have failed to deliver on the promise that you made to the residents of these homes.

On the day that the budget was released and the long-term-care sector got a paltry \$14 million—one minute of additional care per day—there was another press release put out by the long-term-care association, who represent those individuals in the other half of the 75,000 beds. I have here a quotation from Karen Sullivan, executive director of the Ontario Long Term Care Association. She writes:

"We feel that the residents in long-term-care homes in the province in this budget have been forgotten.... The budget investment translates to 50 cents a resident a day, which is one minute of additional care. We were looking for 30 more minutes of care for our residents in this province. In fact, 50,000 people signed petitions over the last three weeks to say that's what was needed....

"I think the message is that they have been forgotten and I think that's hugely, very concerning for the 75,000 people who live in these homes and their families.... We were looking at \$300 million in additional funding and we got \$14" million. "With the one more minute of care funded in today's budget, staff will still be run off their feet to meet basic care needs. The double standard of physical comfort and privacy between old and new

homes will continue, with no commitment to a capital renewal and retrofit program.

"Government has repeatedly said that more needs to be done in long-term care, and care levels and capital renewal were described as budget issues when they were repeatedly raised just over a month ago during the public hearings on the new Long-Term Care Homes Act, Bill 140."

So again we have Karen Sullivan, executive director of the Ontario Long Term Care Association, representing the residents. Again she alludes to the promise that was made during the deliberations on Bill 140. The government says to all the people appearing—and we heard from hundreds of people—"Yes, more needs to be done. Yes, we need to improve care levels. Yes, we need to have a program for capital renewal."

It's not here. It's not in the budget. This was the last budget before the fall election. The promise that the Premier made: He broke it.

Somebody said to me that this is a government that's prepared to say anything during an election campaign, anything to get elected, and it's so true. We've had over 50 promises that have been broken by this Premier. Unfortunately the trust that these people, the most vulnerable and frail elderly people in our province, had in government has been broken. They feel betrayed.

But I want to go back to the committee hearings that took place between January 16 and January 31. As I say, there were some amendments made to the legislation. But certainly on the significant ones that would make a real difference in the lives of people, that would be visionary, there was no response by this government—neither in Bill 140 nor in the last budget. Many people have said that the government failed to listen to those who made representations, and they failed to amend the legislation to provide a capital renewal program.

There are B and C beds in the province of Ontario. About half of the 75,000 beds are B and C beds. B and C beds are beds in homes that usually have residents living in three- and four-bed wards. These individuals deserve to live in homes that meet the 1998 design standards that our government introduced. In fact, we did build 20,000 new beds that meet those design standards. We also renovated the D beds—about 16,000—and those people live in homes that meet those standards.

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What does that mean? It means that the residents in those homes that meet the new 1998 standards do live with dignity, they do live with respect, they do live with privacy, because they don't live in three- and four-bedroom wards, oftentimes wards that don't have a bathroom in the room. These individuals now live in rooms with a maximum of two residents per room, an ensuite bath, in a home that is totally wheelchair-accessible.

We have to remember that a lot of these residents are in wheelchairs. If you're in an older home, you're going to be living, obviously, with little privacy if you're in a three- or four-bedroom ward. You're going to be living in a small room. You're going to be living in a home

where there are hallways that don't allow for two wheelchairs to pass. You're going to be living in a home that doesn't have a dining room on the floor where you live. You're going to have to have the staff take you to the elevator. Everybody lines up. Oftentimes they go to one huge dining room, sometimes in the basement, and it takes a lot of additional staff time just to get the residents there.

This government has made absolutely no commitment to renew half of the beds in this province where residents don't live in homes that meet the 1998 standards. It's disappointing that the government has not moved forward. Our government was prepared to move forward, to have a capital renewal plan, to renew the B and the C beds and to make sure that everybody in this province lived in a home that met the 1998 standards and had the privacy and the dignity that they deserved.

If you take a look at the licensing scheme that this government did introduce, there was a lot of negative response. They made a few minor adjustments to the licensing scheme, but again, it takes a look at the age and the structure of the building and not so much in the way of the performance of the home in meeting the personal care requirement needs. In fact, what did they do to change that section? They lengthened the term and deleted the section that indicated that the government could miss the three-year deadline, and we were supposed to know that our licence would not be renewed. They now at least are on the hook. They have to tell the operators something three years before, and the term was lengthened to 15 years.

The Ontario Long Term Care Association presented a lot of outstanding amendments that would have responded to the issues of uncertainty about the future of long-term-care homes, and the government did not make any attempt whatsoever to reach a compromise and to introduce some of those amendments, which I think would have been in the best interests of the residents in the homes. It would have meant that any decision that government made would have been based on the need for beds in the community and the operator's performance in keeping the building up physically.

If the government had responded, I think it would have provided much clearer direction to the entire long-term-care sector and also to the lenders, because we heard from a lot of people that, because of the uncertainty related to the licensing scheme this government has introduced, there are people who may be wanting to undertake capital renewal. But the banks are not going to be lending you any money if they're not quite sure that you'll have your licence over the long term. The government today can still take your licence away; the home is still at risk. I think it's important to put that on the record.

Also, I want to point out again that when the bill was amended, despite the fact that there is a less onerous regulatory regime and perhaps a little less in the way of administrative duties, the vast majority of the obligations today are still on the home as opposed to the government. There is an introduction of new administrative duties, and

we've already heard from the quotes that I read that unfortunately it's going to mean less personal care for residents as the people within the homes, the front-line providers, struggle to meet the new administrative workload. I think it's really important that we point that out.

I've talked about the licensing scheme. I don't think I will say anything more about that except to say that, although now there is an obligation on the part of the government to at least speak to the issue, three years out the licence can still be removed. There can be a decision made to take away the licence, which would mean the home would close, creating uncertainty for the residents and also people in small communities. We heard from a lot of people in small communities where there is only one retirement long-term-care home. They were quite stressed about not being able to move forward and do capital renewal because of difficulty in obtaining loans and not knowing whether they would have their licence in the future or whether the licence would be taken away and the beds might be moved to another community. The way it is now, there is still all this uncertainty. An operator could be asked to invest money, and again there is that whole issue of lending. There's absolutely no guarantee under the current legislation that the licence is going to be renewed no matter what an operator does or for how long.

Again, the concerns that were brought to our attention have not been fixed. In fact OANHSS said during the deliberations, "The fixed-term licensing provision will increase financing costs for long-term-care homes and complicate refinancings." That's an important note to make. They also said, "It's likely that lenders will attach a premium to cover the risk of non-renewals and will make the negotiation of new financings more difficult." So, again, we just know that some of what the government is doing is going to be creating, and is creating, hardship for people in the province.

I want to take a look at the issue of capital renewal. I find it unbelievable—in light of the fact that when I brought forward my private member's motion in the fall that the government should invest in a capital renewal plan for the 35,000 residents who continue to live in four-bed wards and it was unanimously accepted in this House—that this Premier would not have made a priority in his budget to commit to a capital renewal program. Obviously, in not doing so, it again shows their lack of concern for that particular population. We need to keep in mind that that population is going to be growing, not only in the next 10 years but in the next 20 years, in the next 30 years. Right now these residents, half of the residents in this province, are living in accommodation that is substandard and it is certainly quite different than the residences that students in our universities are living in. We seriously need to take a look at that.

Mr. Mihevc from the Toronto Homes for the Aged had this to say about operating funding and funding for capital renewal when he appeared:

"We find it worrisome that the ... legislation offers no commitment to fund long-term-care homes at the level

needed to provide the right level of care, achieve the enhanced quality that residents deserve or support homes in meeting the expanded legislative requirements.... As an order of government, municipalities have a mandatory obligation to operate long-term-care homes, yet there is no obligation for the province to provide sustainable operating funding or funding for capital renewal. We are concerned that this sets long-term-care homes up for failure."

So this was a big concern, and I'm going to read more letters just a little bit later.

1650

This whole issue about the capital renewal plan and the need for the additional total \$6,000 has been highlighted recently in the last three and a half weeks coming up to the budget when we had 50,000 Ontarians signing petitions wanting the government to take action on more personal care funding and capital renewal. Obviously, without a firm capital renewal plan, it's going to be difficult for the operators to move forward independently without any government support. If you remember, our government did provide financial support to the operators and the individuals who had the D homes. It's really sad that this government didn't show the same type of leadership.

Mr. Scott Kozachenko from the Heritage Green Nursing Home, when he came, had this to say about this lack of ability and the need for additional funding for upgrades to his long-term-care home:

"Heritage Green is a non-profit home for 167 residents that provides jobs for 200 staff in Stoney Creek and the surrounding region.... The nursing home has an occupancy level of almost 99%, a waiting list that averages 75 on any given day, and an aging population that continues to look to us for long-term-care services to meet their immediate and future needs."

He goes on to say, "One solution was projected to cost just over \$2 million, not huge as building renovation and redevelopment projects go but still significant for a 167-bed long-term-care home. Our board, residents, families and staff are now disappointed that we are not able to proceed. We're financially stable, yet we're unable to obtain the financing within our current circumstances. With the uncertainty in Bill 140 and the absence of a government commitment to a capital renewal program, I am not sure when, or even if, we will ever be able to proceed."

We get letter after letter from people who are really concerned about this lack of commitment to a capital renewal program to bring all of the homes in this province up to the 1998 design standards. We're going to have a lot of people who are going to continue to have to call a three- or four-bed ward their home.

We hear from people such as Fraser Wilson, the CEO of Omni Health Care. He had this to say regarding the legislation's lack of a capital renewal plan:

"I've been in long-term care for 20 years and served in many elected capacities at the Ontario Long-Term Care Association, including president in 2002-03....

"I am here to express my disappointment and disillusionment with the proposed new act. I had hoped that Bill 140 would move us forward to embrace the next 20 to 25 years, provide equality for all residents by introducing a capital renewal program for B and C homes, be responsive to current needs, and plan for the future.

"Is this government sending the message that those living in B and C homes are not worthy of the same comfort, privacy and dignity as those in new homes? I had hoped that Bill 140 would recognize this inequality and outline a capital renewal and retrofit plan. Instead, Bill 140 did nothing to address the modernization of older homes or the equality of those residents living in them. Rather, the government introduced the limited licences ... with no plan for the future."

This legislation falls short of its goal to create resident-centred home environments for the over 36,000 Ontarians who continue to live in the over 300 B and C classified homes.

I would say to the minister that if he believes this legislation is a cornerstone—and that's what the minister tried to tell us—upon which the system of the rest of the country is going to be built, he's too late. The rest of the country has plans to eliminate the last four-bed wards for residents while the minister has no plan at all.

I want to contrast the lack of a plan by the McGuinty government with what happened when our government was in office. We recognized in 1998 that there had been no long-term-care beds built in this province for over 10 years. But we also recognized that there was an increasing number of seniors who were going to require long-term-care accommodation, so we invested \$2.1 billion in long-term-care homes in order that these individuals who were going to require these beds could live in comfort, in dignity and with privacy.

We introduced new 1998 design standards—as I say, a maximum of two residents per room, with an ensuite bath. These homes were totally wheelchair-accessible and were designed in a way that there were 32 residents per little home area. They had their own dining room, and all of their own activities could take place within that particular setting. Our government realized that these individuals needed accommodation to respond to their needs, so these new design standards superseded all prior structural standards and guidelines and responded to the needs of these individuals. It provided the residents with a much more home-like setting.

I also want to remind the McGuinty Liberal government that when we made the long-term-care bed expansion investment of \$2.1 billion, it represented the largest-ever investment in health services in Ontario's history. It also represented a big commitment on the part of a government, unlike the fact that for the past 10 years, Liberal and NDP governments had added not one more bed. I guess that's what concerns me, because we have a growing population. The 20,000 beds are filled. We have demand throughout the province of Ontario, we have long waiting lists throughout the province of Ontario, and we have no plan to renew the old beds, nor do we have a

plan for new beds that are going to be required over the next five, 10, 15, 20 years. Nobody quite knows what's going on.

I can tell you that there's a growing crisis in this province. The government has no vision for long-term care. There are currently in this province, as of last October, more than 18,000 people on a waiting list for a long-term-care bed. This is an increase of more than 4,000 from October 2005. So how many more people are we going to have in October 2007 who are going to be waiting for a long-term-care bed? In my own community of Waterloo, there are 669 people on the wait list. In Ottawa, the list sits at a staggering 1,349. In North Bay, the number is over 300.

The shortage of these long-term-care beds is not only affecting the people who are on the waiting list but, as we all know, it is drastically affecting the other parts of the health care system, especially our hospitals, where many of the beds today are filled with patients waiting for a bed in a long-term-care home or waiting for services to be provided in the community. As a result of these individuals being forced to stay in an acute care bed, surgeries are being postponed, they're being cancelled, and patients are waiting hours or days in emergency rooms because there are no beds for them in the hospital.

1700

So the lack of a vision, the lack of a plan, on the part of this government and the fact that so many people need a long-term-care bed and can't be accommodated is putting pressure on other parts of the system.

Last year, we saw the emergency room crisis. We saw emergency rooms throughout the province of Ontario that couldn't respond to the needs of the people who flocked in because we had people occupying beds who should more appropriately have been accommodated in the long-term-care homes or in their own homes. As a result, we had surgeries that were cancelled.

So it is important that the government address the critical shortage of long-term-care beds that we have in Ontario.

An article in the North Bay Nugget on December 19 reinforces the fact that the government doesn't have a vision or it doesn't have a plan by stating that the Ministry of Health has no short-term or long-term vision of how they're going to manage this situation. We have seen this before.

I made reference a few minutes ago to the fact that no new beds had been built in the province for 10 years prior to our 1998 announcement for the construction of 20,000 new beds. Obviously it is time for action.

There were other parts of the legislation that were not addressed.

The Royal Canadian Legion wrote all of us, the government included, and I have a letter here from Robert Silverton, district commander C, Ontario command, who says:

"I am writing to you ... to express our strong concerns about Bill 140 in its present form.

"District C has 51 branches and some 20,438 members."

This letter is to me, and I know that people in other parts of the province got similar letters.

He says that they're active in long-term-care advocacy issues and that many of their members provide considerable financial and volunteer support to the long-term-care homes in Ontario.

He says:

"While we have much in common with the spirit of Bill 140, we cannot support the bill in its present form. Our major concern is the failure of this Bill 140 to include the creation of an ombudsman for long-term-care issues. While the bill provides for a long-term-care adviser, the adviser position is not equivalent to an ombudsman position and lacks many of the powers accorded to the current Ontario Ombudsman. The adviser does not have clearly stated powers to investigate complaints, take action, notify the police if warranted etc., nor the independence that the Ontario Ombudsman enjoys. In fact, we believe this represents no improvement"—and I stress "no improvement"—"over the current provisions the ministry currently commands.

"We believe the creation within the proposed new Bill 140 of an ombudsman can be achieved simply by expanding the mandate of the office of the current Ontario Ombudsman, Mr. André Marin, to include long-term-care issues.

"Unfortunately, the government is backing away from its position to create an independent ombudsman for long-term-care issues and simply abandoning our most vulnerable Ontarians, the seniors and veterans residing in long-term-care homes. Surely"—and this is the letter to me—"you will not allow this to happen to our seniors after so many horror stories about their abuse were exposed on television and news media.

"We also support the positions and concerns expressed by the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors. We too are concerned about the lack of funding to implement necessary changes and enforcement and think this will lead to a reduction in hands-on care and services for residents.

"We urge you to support our position to include the creation of an ombudsman for long-term-care issues (by expanding the current mandate of the Ontario Ombudsman to include long-term-care issues) to protect the rights of our most vulnerable citizens, the seniors who reside in long-term-care homes."

We did put forward the amendment that had been recommended. We would happily have seen the expansion of the mandate of the office of the current Ombudsman, Mr. André Marin. Regrettably, that amendment was not accepted by the government. I guess when you take a look at the situation today in relation to the gambling scandal, you can understand why they didn't want to expand the power of the current Ontario Ombudsman. Again, it showed a lack of response to what was being asked for in this legislation. There's absolutely no reason why the government couldn't have moved forward in this regard, because I believe it is important that there be an independent ombudsman, separate from somebody who

is going to be known as the long-term-care adviser. That individual simply doesn't have the same power and doesn't have the independence. I think it's important that we put that on the record.

I want to move forward and I just want to read from some of the presentations that were made. I have to say, I was moved by many of the presentations that were made. In fact, at times I felt rather depressed upon learning about the conditions in which some of our residents live and the stress that the staff are under to meet the needs, particularly in the older homes where people are living in different conditions than they are in the newly designed homes. I want to read from a few, there were so many that came forward.

I will begin with a presentation by Denise Bedard, the administrator for Scarborough Leisureworld, who's been working in long-term care for 30 years. She says, "The growing demands on an already overburdened and inadequately trained long-term-care service will soar in the near future." She reminds us:

"According to a 2005 Statistics Canada report, in 2001 seniors aged 65 and over accounted for 13% of the nation's population. Projections are that this number will reach 15% by 2011. The numbers of those 80 and over increased at the fastest pace and are expected to be an additional 43% from 2001 to over 1.3 million by 2011. This explosive growth in our aging population will continue to make ever-increasing demands on long-term-care services in the province of Ontario."

She said, "Amid the overwhelming level of need in the nursing home, it is easy to forget the enormous challenges inherent in the job of caring for the resident." She talks about how "the staff may face explicit conflicts, such as complaints from supervisors and peers, if they try to focus on residents' emotions and psychosocial needs in the face of demands for efficiency." She says that "recruitment and retention have become a huge issue within long-term care," and she says that we need to "care for and re-educate the caregiver to be sensitive and to develop meaningful relationships with the residents. What most of us fear about going into a nursing home is that we will have to leave who we were at the door."

She is concerned about the inability of the funding that is required to be provided. She says, "With no additional funding to hire staff to address the ever-increasing paperwork load, the number of hours committed to actual delivery of care to residents diminishes at a time when it should be increasing."

She also speaks to the need for "the development and implementation of electronic patient records," in order that when a resident goes to the hospital, that history or record would be available. It would expedite the treatment of that particular resident.

I have here a presentation from the Trillium Villa Nursing Home family council. This is Brenda Marshall, the chairperson of the family council. This is a home with 152 seniors. It's a C home. She asks for the government to "improve the licensing portion of of this bill." She talks about the uncertainty that the government has

created by its scheme. She says, "You're asking us to assume more responsibility, and yet this bill makes it harder each and every day." She says, "The seniors in our communities across Ontario deserve better than this."

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"Long-term-care homes need to stay open and the government needs to assist us with capital renewal like there was for the 20,000 new beds and the 16,000 rebuilt D beds." She's referring to the beds that we funded. She talks about the need "to protect the residents in these facilities."

Then she talks about her mother-in-law: "My mother-in-law is in the last few days of her life as I speak here today"—she, of course, is living in a C ward home—"but she has no privacy when family visits because she shares her room with another wonderful lady who must watch her die, knowing that one day it will be her turn."

She talks about the need for privacy, the need for comfort and the need for dignity. She says when you've got three or four residents sharing a room, sharing a washroom, that's difficult: "Try going to the washroom when you are in a wheelchair, but yet you cannot get your chair through the bathroom door. These residents" living in Trillium Villa "are living out their lives and dying without privacy and dignity. It is incomprehensible! And they call this the 'golden years'? I am not sure anymore."

Then she says, "We have some wonderful staff at Trillium Villa and, believe me, we've watched them come and go over the years, but they can only do so much. We as family members can only do so much. I must tell you that we are all burning out."

Again, it talks to the need for additional funding, which this government is failing to provide.

We hear from others. I've got a lot here. This is from the Family Council Network Four. These are people who represent the family councils from the 87 long-term-care homes, about 10,000 beds, in the Hamilton-Niagara-Haldimand-Brant region. They express their concern that this legislation has created uncertainty about the future of the older long-term-care homes. They say, "We expect the government to help ensure that accommodations with modern standards of comfort and dignity are available for all long-term-care residents...."

"For example, semi-private rooms with wheelchair-accessible washrooms should be the minimum standard. In Manitoba, there are currently only 63 four-bed ward rooms in the entire province. Ontario has thousands." It's disgraceful.

They talk about the need "for capital renewal to ... bring accommodation for all residents" in this province up to the modern design standards of 1998 that we introduced.

They also talk about the fact that this bill—and I guess they would say now "this budget"—does not respond to the election promise that was made to "invest in better nursing home care, providing an additional \$6,000 in care for every resident." Again, these are the family council members who are saying that this government hasn't lived up to the promise that was made.

Here we have a submission by Saint Luke's Place in Cambridge. Again, it is a not-for-profit long-term-care home. They talk about the fact "that in its present form, Bill 140 will have serious consequences for Ontario's seniors and our health care system as a whole." I have to acknowledge that there were some amendments made, but again, they are concerned that the bill wasn't addressing the "current and future needs" of residents. It was eroding care and services. It was failing "to recognize the already demanding workload of staff." They were concerned about the fixed-licensing term as well and the fact that, obviously, if people were looking for loans from the financial community, it was going to mean higher premium rates and shorter repayment terms.

Again, they feel there's a double standard because in seniors' accommodation right now you've got people who live in the new-bed, 1998 design standard homes and you've got people who are living in the C and B. They believe it's difficult to retain staff, so I want to put that on the record.

Here we have PeopleCare, a family-owned and -operated group of three long-term-care homes in Tavistock, Stratford and Cambridge. In fact, this is a third-generation home. The home was founded by this person's grandfather. They provide high-quality care in a homelike environment. Again, they expressed concern because they are C homes and their homes don't meet the 1998 standards, and obviously Bill 140 isn't going to allow them to move forward and make the investments that are necessary to make changes to the homes. Again, it's a home with caring, dedicated staff, but the funding simply is not there.

Here is a letter from Sean Weylie, Hamilton. He speaks about the fact that things are pretty difficult. He's saying, "With the downsizing of the psychiatric beds, we are now being charged with the responsibility to care for these individuals." We know that's happening, and those people require a different level of care.

This is from the Sun Parlor Home in the county of Essex. They express their concern about the fact that they haven't received the funding commitment that was made by the province for \$6,000 per resident.

Here's another one, from Bernard Maheu, president of the residents' council at the Gibson Long Term Care Centre, a 202-bed, class C home in North York. He's concerned because there are no changes going to be made in funding as required, and the government obviously isn't providing the funding.

Here's another one, from the region of Durham: They're concerned about the financial burden of this legislation and the fact they're already heavily subsidizing the care and services of residents, and the need for additional provincial funding.

The list goes on and on and on. Suffice it to say that this government, under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, has failed to respond to the commitments that it made to seniors in 2003. They have failed to keep their promise. They have presented no vision for the future of long-term-care homes in this province or for seniors,

whose numbers are increasing. They have not stepped up to the plate with any capital renewal programs for the C and B beds in the province of Ontario. We are not going to see the elimination of the three- and four-bed wards in the near future. We're not going to have totally wheelchair-accessible beds.

I would urge this government to seriously consider their broken promise. I would urge that in the last few months of their time in office they would come forward with a capital renewal plan, that they would live up to their commitment of providing each resident in this province with the additional \$6,000 in funding that they have committed, because as it is right now, they have betrayed the trust of seniors, the families and the front-line workers. Every senior in this province deserves to live with dignity in a homelike environment.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments. The Chair recognizes the member for Nickel Belt.

Ms. Martel: I just want to reinforce some of the concerns that were raised by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, concerns that I will reinforce some more when I get an ability to speak.

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First of all, New Democrats have serious concerns with the fixed-licensing scheme that is evident in Bill 140, especially in the absence of a capital renewal program. We heard from many homes, small homes in particular, that this will create an enormous financial burden for them, that it will increase lending rates because there will be a risk premium that will be attached to redevelopment, and in light of that, that many of them would be unable to get the financing together to actually meet the standards that the government wants them to comply with. The notion of fixing your licence and tying it to structural compliance, which is new and not done anywhere else, is one that's going to have serious, serious negative consequences, particularly for the smaller and rural homes.

Secondly, with respect to the role of the ombudsman, you can do it in one of two ways: You could have a new ombudsman position for long-term care, and we heard that as an option, or expand the oversight of the current Ombudsman. The option that New Democrats put on the table was of course to expand the oversight function of the current Ombudsman to include long-term care, and this, regrettably, was voted down by the Liberals.

I can tell people that this office of long-term-care resident and family adviser is just not going to cut it for the folks who came before us and talked about the need for an independent oversight function. It certainly doesn't cut it for the Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario command, who lobbied on this matter long before Bill 140 showed up.

Finally, with respect to the funding, the government failed in this most recent budget to live up to the promise it made of \$6,000 in additional funding for enhanced care. I don't know how things are going to get better in homes under—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The Chair recognizes the member for Nipissing.

Ms. Smith: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the comments made by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. I thought it was interesting that she spoke about our record in office. I would just like to remind her that we have seen a 35% increase in the budget of long-term care since 2004-05, or some \$740 million.

As well, she talked about the need for redevelopment and the lack of any new bed announcements, when in fact our government announced in October 2006 that we would be creating 1,750 new beds and 662 rebuilt beds in the not-too-distant future. I believe we have RFPs out for most of those already.

I also noted that the member for Kitchener-Waterloo spoke about certain amendments that would have been visionary. I think she was referring to some she was proposing. I would just point out three that she was proposing that I don't think in any way would qualify as visionary. The member moved a Conservative motion that would have removed the obligation of long-term-care homes to involve residents and their family members in writing their individual care plans. Let me just repeat that for those who didn't understand: The Conservative Party wanted to remove the involvement of residents and family members in preparing their individual care plans. We encourage the involvement of residents and family members in developing their own care plan, for they are the ones who spend the most time with the residents and are most involved, in some cases, in the day-to-day care of the residents.

She wanted to remove the independence of residents' councils mandated under the legislation, and actually put forward a motion to remove the independence of our residents' councils, which is contrary to everything we heard from every resident and resident council member before the committee. Again, I wouldn't qualify that as visionary.

I just would like to wind up by asking the member for Kitchener-Waterloo—her leader has indicated that he plans to remove \$2.5 billion from the health budget. I wonder—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The Chair recognizes the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak this afternoon to Bill 140, the long-term-care act, and the comments from the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, our critic for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. She's done a great job at going through Bill 140 and listening to all the concerns out there at the many committee meetings, the presentations that were presented, and brought forth amendments—I think there was a record number of amendments presented. I thought I had a lot in the Clean Water Act, but this surpassed that with hundreds of amendments. It was a sign that the bill was seriously flawed. Some amendments were made; obviously not enough.

We've heard many quotes this afternoon from the long-term-care sector that the changes that were made—"For long-term care, the cupboard is bare" was the reaction to the budget. And that's the reaction to a promise

that was made that they would deliver outstanding long-term care, \$6,000 more for long-term-care patients.

And when asked in the Legislature by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care said about the capital improvements that were needed to provide more spaces and adequate upgrades to the B and C class homes, which were three- and four-bed rooms, that it was a budgetary matter. Then the budget comes, and guess what? Nothing. Zero. So in the hallway, the Ontario Long-Term Care Association is upset, and they should be upset. They are out there representing the residents in long-term care, and there wasn't adequate funding. How are we supposed to take care of our seniors, the most vulnerable in our society, when there isn't adequate investment for upgrading, for new homes? The phone calls coming into my office about the needs in the long-term-care centres—the staff, everyone, is doing all they can. They can't provide enough adequate care for the residents, and this government is not helping them.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): I want to start by acknowledging the fine work of members on all sides of this House on this very important piece of legislation; in particular, the member for Nipissing, the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, from whom we just heard, and of course my colleague from Nickel Belt.

I listened intently to the member for Kitchener-Waterloo and her very wise critique of this legislation, and I concur, and my colleagues concur as well. We know that this legislation is flawed. It's flawed for a number of reasons, and we've heard those reasons quite clearly from the public and also from other stakeholders. There's been great interest in this bill. We shouldn't be surprised by that, given the changing demographics of the province. We know that over the next few years there will be an incredible strain put on our long-term-care facilities and the system itself.

During my short time here, I have already heard from almost 200 of my constituents, some of them long-term-care facility residents and their family members, who have called for improvements on things such as the standards for hands-on care, which is a very important element of this legislation. My party has offered some significant amendments to this legislation. Unfortunately, the government has chosen, as they chose with the amendments proposed by the official opposition, to reject them. That's unfortunate, because the amendments certainly would add to the legislation and would make it more appropriate in terms of meeting the needs of our long-term-care facility residents, both now and in the future. For that reason, and for others that my colleague from Nickel Belt will outline in her presentation later on this afternoon, we join with the official opposition in our opposition to this legislation.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the Chair recognizes the member for Kitchener-Waterloo.

Mrs. Witmer: I appreciate the comments from the member for Nickel Belt. I think most of the amendments that were put forward we both agreed on, and certainly

she identified again the key issues of concern: the fixed licensing, the impact that has on the capital renewal plan, and the fact that there was no money for capital renewal of the older beds. The ombudsman issue was a big one. I think in some respects people felt there had been a promise, a commitment made, and at the end of the day there is no one there who is going to provide the independent oversight with the power to recommend that changes be made. And of course there's that whole issue of funding, that \$6,000-per-resident broken promise.

I want to thank the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock for her comments. Obviously, as a former nurse she has a deep appreciation for the residents in these homes.

I want to say welcome to the member from York South-Weston. It's really great to have you in the House and I know you're going to make a great contribution.

To the member for Nipissing, she spoke to the fact that, oh, yes, they did have a plan to add long-term-care beds and she referred to a number of approximately 1,750. Well, that was an announcement that was made last fall. In this budget, they simply reannounced that number, and if you take a look at what I said in my remarks earlier today, we have at least 18,000 people on a wait-list. We had 4,000 more last October than we had the October before. And so without any plan for new building, we obviously are not going to meet the needs of these residents. It's going to mean that our emergency rooms continue to be backed up. It's going to mean that our hospitals continue to be occupied by people who should be in long-term-care beds.

I would urge the government: Take action now. Develop a vision.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Martel: It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate this afternoon. I can see that I'm going to run out of time, so I'll do the best I can to get as much as I can on the record, and then people will have to tune in on another day when I finish up my remarks.

I want to begin by recognizing some friends from ONA up in the gallery today: Sandra Bearzot, Andy Summers, Carolyn Edgar, Shannon Dacunha, Lawrence Walter. Thank you for being here. I hope I got that all right for all of you. It's a pleasure to see you here, and I want to thank ONA for participating in the consultations around Bill 140 because they added a great deal of very excellent information to those proceedings.

I also want to thank the other organizations, particularly the front-line staff from many homes who came forward and spoke about their experiences right now in long-term-care homes. Frankly, it was distressing indeed to hear about those experiences because it was very clear that there are not enough staff; there are not enough hands to provide the quality care that residents in our long-term-care homes need. That's not an indictment of those staff who are in the homes now, desperately trying to do that. It is a sad reality that they are doing the best that they can, but there are not enough of them to provide

the kind of care we should be providing to seniors in Ontario long-term-care homes today.

Many of the concerns that I raised on second reading were reinforced by those organizations, those individuals, who came before the public hearings, so I'm going to speak to them again. There were other concerns that were raised, frankly, that increased, from my perspective, the need for us to vote in opposition to Bill 140. I want to start to focus on those concerns today.

That leads me to the concern that is most important to me: minimum standards of care. As I stand here today, as we debate this bill, there are no minimum standards of hands-on care per resident per day in Ontario—none. For any resident in any long-term-care home, there is not a minimum standard of hands-on care that they can expect to receive every day. As I stand here debating this bill today, we have no idea when there might be some reinstatement of minimum standards of hands-on care per resident per day. We don't have any indication of when that's actually going to happen. We're three and a half years into the Liberal government's mandate and we still don't know when that's going to take place. As we stand here today and debate this bill, we also don't know what that minimum standard of care is actually going to be, because the government hasn't given any indication of that either. So this critical issue of the hands-on care that a resident can expect remains a critical issue despite all of what happened during the public hearings in terms of the Liberals being forced, kicking and screaming, to finally put some small measure of something in this regard into the bill.

I've got to tell you that it's a far cry from what Premier McGuinty promised in the last election campaign. Here's a copy of the Ontario Liberal Plan for Change regarding changes in long-term-care homes. It says, "Ensure residents get more personal care, including a minimum 2.25 hours of daily nursing care." We don't have that now and we have no guarantee that we're going to get it, despite the election promise that was made by Mr. McGuinty and despite the individuals, especially the front-line workers, who came in overwhelming numbers to say that if you don't have the minimum standard of care, you have no kind of guarantee of care at all, and you absolutely have to have that and it has to be funded if we're going to make positive change for residents in Ontario.

A little bit of history that I want to get on the record again: There was a standard of care under our government. It was 2.25 hours of hands-on care per resident per day. It was cancelled by the Conservatives in 1996. It was proof—that is, the cancellation—that that really had a negative impact on the quality of care and the level of care that were provided to seniors in our long-term-care homes.

In 2001, there was a study done by PricewaterhouseCoopers. It was funded by the Ministry of Health and it looked at Ontario homes and residents and the quality of care and compared those to other jurisdictions in Canada, in the United States and in Europe. I just want to put on

the record some of those findings to reinforce why you have to have a legislated standard of care.

"Levels of Service—Key Findings

"The results of this study indicate that residents in Ontario long-term-care facilities—they use the word "facilities"; we use "homes" now, but that was in the report then so that's what I'm going to use—"receive less nursing and therapy services than similar jurisdictions with similar populations.

"Ontario LTC"—long-term-care—"residents have some significant differences in terms of their levels of depression, cognitive levels and behavioural problems which indicate higher needs for service levels to meet higher care requirements.

"Receipt of nursing services

"In addition to the findings related to lower levels of nursing service:

"The proportion of care that is provided by registered nurses in Ontario long-term care is less than other jurisdictions—11% less."

If you look at the "Receipt of Specific Nursing Interventions," the study says the following:

"Restricted range of motion is an important problem in long-term-care populations. Given the high levels of those with arthritis (30%) in Ontario long-term-care facilities and strokes (22%), passive and active range of motion is an important part of disability limitation and activation which can be provided by nursing and aide staff.

"The data indicates that 68% of Ontario long-term-care residents do not receive nursing rehabilitation and a further 24% receive one intervention in a seven-day period. The data further demonstrates that 67.1% of the Ontario long-term-care population have" restricted range of motion, "yet only 32% of this population 'in need' actually receives any range of motion exercises."

With respect to "Receipt of Mental Health Services

"Ontario long-term-care residents had the highest proportion of both mental health disturbances (61%) and problems (40%). The residents with mental health disturbances and/or problems would be considered those in need of mental health services.

"Less than 6% of Ontario long-term-care residents had any intervention related to evaluation or talk therapies while 31% received an anti-psychotic or restraint....

"Given the high proportion of residents in Ontario long-term care with cognitive problems related to Alzheimer's or a dementia (53%), this presents a high resource demand for care providers in the Ontario long-term-care setting.

"Receipt of rehabilitation services

"The percentage of people with rehabilitation potential based on the MDS 2.0 was reasonably similar across settings, with Ontario long-term care ... at about 14%, about 10% in Saskatchewan and 5% in Manitoba."

But "the service level for Ontario long-term care is lower than in Manitoba (13%) and substantially lower than in Saskatchewan (38%)...."

Those were some of the results of the study that was done in 2001, five years after the Conservatives had cancelled the minimum standard of care. Some government members during the course of the hearings tried to do what they could to minimize the impact of the study and minimize the impact of the findings. I find that particularly curious because it was some Liberal members themselves, past and present, who thoroughly embraced the study when it came out—who embraced the study, embraced the conclusions—and attacked the former Conservative government for the lack of minimum standards of care in long-term-care homes. I think it's worth putting on the record, because there was such an attempt to minimize the study findings during the course of the debate on Bill 140, what some other Liberals had to say about the study.

Mrs. McLeod, former Liberal leader, put forward a resolution in this House on November 7, 2002, and said the following: "That, in the opinion of this House, the Ernie Eves government should immediately establish minimum standards of care for nursing homes and homes for the aged, including the reintroduction of minimum hours of nursing care and the requirement for a minimum of at least one bath a week."

Mrs. McLeod said during the course of her remarks, "I've chosen to use the opportunity to present this particular resolution because of a growing personal sense of outrage I have at the Harris-Eves government's, in my view, deliberate abandonment of our most vulnerable seniors."

She went on to say, "The minister says"—that's the Conservative Minister of Health at the time—"We don't want numerical standards, because if you have a numerical standard, a minimum becomes a maximum.' A minimum only becomes a maximum if the funding body, the government, only funds to the level of minimum care. If they provide more dollars, more care can be given; you don't get held to the minimums. But at least you get some basics, some basics for which this government"—the Conservatives at the time—"can be held accountable."

How appropriate. It applies to this Liberal government, doesn't it? Here's what the member from Hamilton Mountain, now the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, had to say, who participated in the same debate:

"I'm pleased to rise and support my colleague's resolution for minimum hours of nursing care and the requirement for a minimum of at least one bath per week. It's almost a shame that we need to make this resolution, that we've come to this in Ontario in 2002, isn't it?"

Isn't it a shame that in 2007 we stand in this House and there still is no minimum standard of care in the province of Ontario, despite the Liberal election promise in 2003 to reinstate a minimum standard?

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Here's the member for Sarnia-Lambton, the Minister of Culture now. This is what she had to say with respect to this particular resolution put forward by her colleague Mrs. McLeod:

"I find that, in this day and age, to actually have to be in this House to ask for a resolution to establish minimum standards is almost as if we're returning to the Dark Ages when it comes to our long-term-care standards." Well, no kidding. "Again, cutting minimum hours of standards for nursing care means that there is no accountability mechanism, so they don't have to answer as to why these hours are not being provided." And neither does the Liberal government right now today because there aren't minimum standards in place, so you can't hold the government accountable.

Let me make one final reference to the current Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing who, during the course of this particular debate, referenced the study and said the following:

"That's really what this is all about. Even with the government's new investment on the operating side, for which I applaud them, we will still rank dead last. The decision we have to make in this province is, with the generally high standard of living we have, where we're rated one of the best countries in the world and we are the best province in the best country in the world, do we really think, in terms of the way we take care of our seniors, that it's good enough to rank dead last when it comes to nursing services and personal care services we provide for our seniors in the homes? That's what it's all about."

Mr. Gerretsen was absolutely correct at the time. This is what it's all about. And that's why I expected, when the government brought forward Bill 140, it would finally live up to the promise it made in 2003 to reinstate the minimum standards of care. Did that make its way into the bill? No, it did not.

Actually, what's even more interesting is that as the debate kicked off or as we started to deal with this bill—probably before we started to deal with this bill—the minister was asked about minimum standards: you know, the promise that his Premier made to families and to residents in long-term care. He was asked about minimum standards and why the government wasn't reinstating those and, on October 4, 2006, the minister said this in the *Timmins Daily Press*:

"Consultations for the legislation led the government to believe minimum hours of care was a bad idea, said Smitherman.

"It treats 75,000 people like widgets," he said, and added that his proposed legislation still gets to the heart of that election promise."

Well, no, it didn't. And you know what? I find it really hard to imagine that people came and told Ms. Smith that it was a bad idea to have minimum standards. I'd be very surprised if we could find more than one group, one organization that actually said that to Madame Smith during the consultations.

So I put in a freedom of information request—and I'm sorry that the Attorney General isn't here right now; I'm sure he's coming back soon—on October 4, the same day the minister made this statement and I said the following to the Ministry of Health:

"I am requesting a list of the names of individuals/groups/organizations who participated in consultations with the government in advance of the introduction of Bill 140, the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2006.

"In particular, I would like to know which individuals/groups/organizations said during these consultations that having minimum hours of care/minimum standards of hands-on care, would be a bad idea.

"For your information and review," I say to the FOI coordinator at the Ministry of Health in this letter, "I specifically refer you to documents enclosed which outlined the Liberal promise on this issue, as well as remarks made by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in recent media reports so that there is no misunderstanding in this regard."

I put in that FOI request October 4, 2006. The date today? March 29, 2007. Still today I do not have any list of any organization, group or individual who told Madame Smith during the consultations that having a minimum standard was a bad idea. We have gone back and forth and back and forth and back and forth at least three times now with the FOI coordinator at the Ministry of Health to make sure that she clearly understands my request, and she does. She said she was hoping to get me this information for today, but I do not have it and I don't think I'm ever going to see it because I don't think anyone came and told the government that minimum standards were a bad idea. I don't believe it for a moment. And I hope it doesn't take me three years to get to the bottom of this freedom of information request, too.

At the public hearings, there were lots of people who had lots to say about why you needed a minimum standard, and some of these same people had also told the government that during Madam Smith's consultations. Let me quote just quote ONA, for example, since they're here today in the gallery. ONA said, "Many of the residents in long-term care are in need of complex nursing care. These residents require the broader assessment skill set that registered nurses bring (both from a physical and cognitive care perspective), and without legislating minimum staffing standards and levels of care, resident care is not going to improve."

They go on: "Legislating minimum staffing standards and levels of care is fundamental to ensure that resident daily nursing and personal care needs are met. It would also improve staff workload and working conditions in long-term-care homes. While the focus of Bill 140 is on resident safety, we believe worker safety and working conditions are equally important to quality care"—and they are right.

"The care needs of residents living in long-term-care homes in Ontario have increased—their conditions becoming less stable and more complex—since the beginning of the resident classification system in 1993. Nursing and personal staff care, however, has not kept up with this increase in resident acuity because of the elimination of minimum staffing standards. Bill 140 will make little difference in the daily lives of residents without minimum staffing standards and levels of care

reinstated and clearly regulated." They went on to call for "minimum staffing standards of 3.5 hours (including 0.68 RN hours) in line with staffing standards in other jurisdictions."

Who else came to talk to us about staffing standards? CAW said the following: "The most fundamental matter requiring redress is the reinstatement of the principle of a minimum staffing standard, a position we have consistently set out in our previous submissions concerning the Commitment to Care consultations and other opportunities to convey to government our views with respect to the provisions of quality care...."

"If the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2006, is to truly become 'the cornerstone of our strategy to ensure the best possible level of care for residents' and 'make Ontario a leader in protecting the rights of long-term-care residents,'" to quote the minister from his October 3, 2006, statement to the Legislature, then surely minimum standards must be the 'cornerstone' to such legislation."

What was interesting in their particular submission is that CAW pointed out in a graph that they gave to the committee all of the other areas where Ontario has minimum standards set out: minimum standards with respect to the administration and the ratio of beds to the administrator, the ratio of the director of nursing to the number of beds in the home, the ratio with respect to registered nursing staff. It goes on: food handlers, coordinator of therapy services, recreation and leisure services, registered dietician, etc. The government's okay to set out some of those standards, but they're not okay to set out some minimum standards of hands-on care daily.

CAW ended by saying, "Why is it appropriate to abandon the minimum staffing standards (or fail to reinstate the standard) but nonetheless maintain other minimum standards regulations requiring long-term-care homes to contain private bathrooms ... or ... illumination levels...? What we require is minimum standards of staffing for residents in long-term-care homes." Again, they also argued for a standard of 3.5 hours of hands-on care.

We came to another submission, by the Family Council Network Four. They represent the family councils in 87 long-term care-homes in the Hamilton-Niagara-Haldimand-Brant region. They said the following: "We had expected to find a commitment to more time for hands-on personal care in the bill. Ontario remains well below other jurisdictions in the amount of personal care provided to residents. Bill 140 does not stipulate minimum staffing levels or minimum hours of care.

"We have a great deal of respect for family members, but there is a chronic shortage of staff in our LTC homes...."

"We look forward to the government providing the funding and staffing commitments to permit at least 3.5 hours of hands-on personal care per day."

That was also reinforced by a submission that was made to us by the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario. Interestingly enough, they quoted the Provincial Auditor's report and said that "the 2004 Provincial Auditor's report called on the ministry to

“—verify the reasonableness of the current standard rates for each funding category and develop standards to measure the efficiency of facilities providing services;

“—track staff-to-resident ratios, the number of registered nursing hours per resident and the mix of registered to non-registered nursing staff and determine whether the levels of care provided are meeting the assessed needs of residents; and

“—develop appropriate staffing standards for long-term-care facilities.”

1750

“Full action on these recommendations”—said RNAO—“would strongly address needs in the sector. Until 1996, the minimum standard of care was legislated at 2.25 hours per resident per day. It is time to reinstate a minimum standard of care.”

Their recommendation: “Reinstate a minimum standard of care in long-term care, and set that standard at 3.5 hours per resident per day.”

Even if the government didn't want to take into account what people were saying at the public hearings, when they developed the bill they could have taken into account what had been said at the Casa Verde coroner's jury. There were 85 recommendations that were made as a result of that coroner's inquest into the very tragic death of two residents at the hands of another. They made a very clear recommendation with respect to staffing standards. I want to put it on the record. It says the following:

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in the interim, pending the evidence-based study, should fund and set standards requiring long-term-care facilities to increase staffing levels to, on average, no less than 0.59 registered nursing hours per resident per day and 3.06 per resident per day overall nursing and personal care for the average Ontario case mix” index. “The funding formula for the nursing and personal care envelope must be immediately adjusted to reflect this minimum standard.”

One of 85 recommendations made after an inquest that went on 34 days, that heard from 43 witnesses, where the jury itself deliberated for nine days, and the bill comes forward to us and there's nothing on staffing standards.

The outcome of the public hearings went something like this. Despite the minister's claim that consultations for the long-term-care bill had led the government to believe that minimum hours of care was a bad idea, clearly those who came to the committee had something else to say, and they included front-line workers and family members of residents in long-term care. So that was reinforced by those people during the committee hearings.

It was for that reason that I moved this amendment on behalf of our party:

“I move that the bill be amended by adding the following section:

“Minimum care

“7.1 Every licensee of a long-term-care home shall ensure that each resident of the long-term-care home receives a minimum of 3.5 hours of nursing and personal

care each day from registered nurses, registered practical nurses, personal support workers and health care aides, of which a minimum of 0.68 hours must be provided by a registered nurse.”

Regrettably—oh, so regrettably—that was voted down by the Liberals in committee. What did the Liberals do? Despite what Minister Smitherman had to say—that nobody said this was a good idea—despite the fact that the government had made a promise and didn't seem to be wanting to keep it, because of the overwhelming number of people who came to the committee and said, “You absolutely have to do that,” many of them front-line workers and family members of residents in care, the government had to bring forward an amendment that says the following:

“Every licensee of a long-term-care home shall ensure that the home meets the staffing and care standards provided for in the regulations.”

That is a far cry from what was recommended in Casa Verde. It is a far cry from what the government promised during the election of 2003. There is no reference to any hours at all and there certainly is no indication of when this is going to be delivered on. The amendment, frankly, represents the absolute minimum commitment that the Liberals could get away with on standards of care given what they heard during the public hearings. Otherwise, they risked being soundly condemned for refusing to acknowledge what so many people said over and over again.

It is marginally—underlined, emphasized—marginally better than the original bill, which said absolutely nothing about minimum standards of hands-on care. In the face of having something versus absolutely nothing, I reluctantly voted in favour of this particular amendment.

I think that it's time—way past time—for the Liberals to meet their election promise. I don't believe for one moment that right now in the province of Ontario we are at a standard of 2.86 hours of care, as was emphasized several times during the course of the public hearings. I have no doubt that in order to get to that conclusion, the government decided to use the hours of paid work of staff versus the hours actually worked by staff to bump up the numbers. There is a significant difference between the two, because you could have hours of paid work but still have people off on leave; you could have hours of paid work but still have people off on vacation. The key criterion is the actual amount of hours being worked by staff day in, day out. You don't want to have management staff in there, either. You want to have staff who are providing hands-on care each day: registered nurses, PSWs, registered nursing aides etc., the people who are providing hands-on care every day.

So while I have heard the government say, “Oh, no problem. We're already at 2.86 hours, so we've met our election commitment,” I don't believe for one moment that that's what the actual level is, because I think the government used hours of paid work to try and bump up their numbers to get there versus looking at the number of hours actually worked by staff, day in and day out.

My conclusion from all of this is that we desperately need a minimum standard of care in legislation, because that's the only way this government is going to keep its promise. This government in the last election, when it was looking for votes, went to families of residents in long-term care, went to staff and made a specific promise to reinstate the minimum standard of 2.25 hours. When the legislation was introduced over three years after the promise had been made, the legislation was silent on any kinds of minimum standards.

On the same day the bill was introduced, the minister said, "There's no reason to have a minimum standard because, during the consultations, people told us otherwise," which I cannot believe for one moment is true. From my perspective, the only way we're going to get some minimum standards in place in Ontario for residents is to actually have it in legislation. We don't have it now, and it is a failure of the Liberals to not acknowledge that and to not acknowledge that that is needed in order to be sure that something will happen.

I say again, as we stand here today and debate this bill, that there is no minimum standard of care in place three

and a half years after the Liberals made the promise. We don't know if and when there's going to be a minimum standard of care adopted in this province for residents in long-term-care homes, and we certainly don't know what that standard is ever going to be. The government refused to acknowledge it in the legislation and certainly refused to acknowledge it at all during the course of the public hearings.

I feel strongly that this is a very serious concern. It remains outstanding. We have talked to some of our colleagues at CUPE, ONA, CAW and at the Ontario Health Coalition. Nobody has said that the government is talking to them at all about any kind of standard. I don't know when this is going to happen or even if it's going to happen, and that's why a standard of 3.5 hours should have been put into the legislation.

I have other concerns which I will have to raise on another day.

The Acting Speaker: I thank the member in her lead.

It being almost 6 p.m. of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m., Monday, April 2.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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No. 150

N° 150

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 2 April 2007

Lundi 2 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 avril 2007

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Speaker, today marks the second anniversary of the passing of Pope John Paul II. I want to advise you and members of this House that on this occasion I will be presenting a private member's bill which, if passed into law, will designate the second day of April of every year as Pope John Paul II Day in the province of Ontario. By doing so, this Legislature will not only honour the man who served as spiritual leader to millions in this province and around the world but will ensure that the values of compassion, respect and tolerance—values personified throughout his life—are contemplated and, indeed, celebrated by the citizens of this province.

Although I am not Roman Catholic, I have felt the powerful influence of this unique human being, who carried out his calling to leadership with humility, with compassion and with courage. He made human dignity and human rights his passion. His life has inspired young and old, and his great impact has been felt by faiths and cultures around the globe. It is my hope that by setting aside this day as proposed, every Ontarian, regardless of religion or culture, will be encouraged to embrace and to promote those values with the hope that we will be strengthened as individuals, as a province and indeed as a country.

I therefore ask all members to support this bill when it comes before the House next and that the government will support its speedy passage into law.

Dziękuję.

MINISTER'S VISIT TO HAMILTON

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I am pleased to rise today to talk about the success of the McGuinty government's initiative and dedication to injured workers across Ontario.

Last week, the Minister of Labour, Minister Peters, visited Hamilton to announce increases in reforms to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. This is great news, not only to our community but to all of Ontario. An increase of 7.5% will be seen over the next three years to

injured workers' benefits. This will be a significant help to those who are unable to work due to their injuries.

During Minister Peters's announcement he mentioned how much he likes coming to Hamilton, where he always makes a point of shopping at the Beach Road deli to pick up some of their world-famous kielbasa. He is thrilled now that they have a new location on Locke Street, a wonderful and unique shopping district in Hamilton.

I accompanied Minister Peters on his Locke Street quest as another famous Locke Street location, the west town, is one of my favourite places. The staff at the Beach Road deli were delighted to have the minister shopping. The owner's daughter, Christina—Dan Kwiatkowski's daughter—was there, and with gracious hospitality served Minister Peters some tasty kielbasa. We then walked across the street to another Locke Street landmark, the Locke Street Bakery, for their famous bagels. Owner Peter Giorgini welcomed Minister Peters with his big smile and his ready handshake. He even took Minister Peters back to show him how he makes those famous bagels.

Citizens of Hamilton want to thank Minister Peters for visiting Hamilton, sharing the good news for injured workers, and for his interest in our small business community on Locke Street.

MINISTER OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): This Legislature has many traditions, ways that we show respect to the people who built this province and to the people who elected us. Over the past two weeks, we have seen the minister responsible for the lottery corporation ignore those traditions.

He refused to step aside even though the government agency he is responsible for has been mismanaged; even though the agency he is responsible for has allowed Ontarians to be victims of fraud; even though he knew about the problem six months ago and did absolutely nothing. This isn't acceptable. People expect integrity and honesty from their representatives. This minister has not delivered.

Dalton McGuinty has refused to deliver because he has refused to ask for the minister's resignation. That is why, on Friday, my colleagues and I were pleased to launch a petition to allow Ontarians who are outraged by the minister's behaviour to demand his resignation. I encourage Ontarians who are upset by the lack of integrity

of Dalton McGuinty's government to sign this petition and ask for his resignation.

The petition is available from my office in Woodstock, from all my PC caucus colleagues and their offices, or on my website, www.erniehardemanmpp.com. The petition says in part that Ontarians have a "right to expect leadership from their government."

The people signing the petitions are asking that "Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): There's a very well-used phrase, and that's about chickens coming home to roost. They're coming home to roost on Dalton McGuinty's mega nuclear power plan.

Just last week, it was reported that the Nuclear Waste Management Organization has deemed sedimentary rock, beloved of Ontarians, to be a worthy home for nuclear waste. In the past, it has only been something that would be shipped up north, but now reporters in London, Kingston, Windsor, Barrie, Toronto and Hamilton are talking about their communities being candidates as the final resting place for so many, many tonnes of high-level, toxic, radioactive waste. Obviously, being selected in this negative lottery is not a prize communities want to win. It's bad for investment and bad for people wanting to live in an area, frankly.

This government has a big window of opportunity to set aside this nuclear mega scheme, set aside wasting \$40 billion on nuclear plants and set aside the opportunity to make every community in Ontario a potential target for a nuclear waste dump.

Ontario communities count on the provincial government to protect them. The question is, will this one do that?

1340

BRAMPTON CIVIC HOSPITAL

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise in the House today to thank our health minister, George Smitherman, and our government for making an additional investment of \$114 million towards our new Brampton Civic Hospital and its capital costs.

This fall, the Brampton Civic Hospital will open with 479 beds, increasing shortly thereafter to 527 beds in 2009. Our current hospital's capacity to deal with emergency room visits will more than double by the time we reach full capacity.

This October, one of the finest hospitals in all of Ontario will open in Brampton. Our government's investment means that we're going to be able to provide the residents of Brampton with the highest quality of health care available.

Building a brand new hospital is rare for any community, and I'm extremely proud of Mayor Susan Fennell, the Brampton Board of Trade, community groups and individuals for responding to the fundraising needs of the William Osler Health Centre for the benefit of Brampton Civic Hospital. We are making history together. Clearly, my community recognizes and appreciates its role in helping our province build a world-class facility.

On behalf of the residents of Brampton, I would like once again to thank our government and the minister for their ongoing leadership and commitment to health care in my community of Brampton.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Last week, the Toronto Sun carried an article titled, "How the Grits Tried to Spin a Scandal." Of course, the scandal referred to was with the Ontario lottery system and the rip-off of millions of dollars of winnings from ticket purchasers. The article detailed the efforts of highly paid political advisers Warren Kinsella and Jim Warren to come up with ways to dispute the claim and protect the tails of lottery officials and members of the McGuinty government.

The same underhanded efforts are now underway to stop an independent investigation of allegations of obstruction of justice, a Criminal Code offence, that the CBC's Fifth Estate suggested occurred in the Bob Edmonds case, a contention that Ombudsman Marin agreed could well have happened.

The allegation involved a senior command officer of the OPP, creating a clear conflict for the OPP, yet the government insists they are the appropriate police service to investigate. The government's highly paid spin doctors are advising them to push back at the opposition parties, charging they're not supporters of the OPP.

These are gutter Liberal tactics at work here. Police investigating themselves, especially dealing with serious allegations, is not appropriate and is a significant principle within government legislation currently before the House.

If the government continues with their refusal to allow an independent investigation of the obstruction-of-justice allegation, the official opposition will consider utilizing all procedural tools available to us to convey our abhorrence of what increasingly looks like a political cover-up.

JOHN ROBERTS

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): On Friday night, the Honourable John Roberts passed away and Canada lost one of the most intelligent and visionary politicians of our time.

John Roberts was elected to the House of Commons in 1968, 1974 and 1980 in the then swing riding of St.

Paul's. He served as Secretary of State of Canada, Minister of the Environment and Minister of Employment and Immigration.

During his time as Minister of the Environment, John Roberts was one of the first and most passionate defenders of our environment, going head to head against President Reagan and the United States government, bringing recognition to the need to protect the environment and eventually laying the groundwork for an historic acid rain treaty.

John Roberts ran for the Liberal leadership in 1984. While he didn't win, his contribution to the federal Liberal Party in Canada was a lasting one. There are still numerous Roberts supporters participating at a variety of levels in federal and provincial politics, including myself.

In 1984, as I was finishing up my last year of university, it was John Roberts's decision to seek the Liberal leadership that convinced me to take that step from a follower of politics to a participant, as I joined his campaign convinced, to this day, that he would have made a great leader and Prime Minister.

It was John Roberts's intellect, professionalism and compassion for the disadvantaged, the environment and democratic renewal, mixed with his dedication to growing our economy, that inspired me to dedicate my time, passion and eventually my life to public service.

On behalf of all members of the Ontario Legislature, I would like to express our condolences to the family and many friends of the Honourable John Roberts.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough—Rouge River): I rise today to speak about an important day—a day that marked new beginnings for Ontario citizens. On March 22, no less than two weeks ago, the Honourable Greg Sorbara presented the 2007 Ontario budget. It spoke of creating new opportunities, strengthening our economy and building on our investments in Ontario's most vulnerable citizens.

The words of my colleague the Honourable Mary Anne Chambers, speaking to the new Ontario child benefit last week, drew on a serious truth: Family and child poverty in Ontario is an issue that affects more than one person, and in more ways than one. It affects the self-esteem of children, their families and their futures.

Through the \$2.1-billion Ontario child benefit, 1.3 million Ontario families with children will benefit from the program. It equates to providing thousands of low-income families the opportunity to move off social assistance without having to worry about losing support for their children.

I am pleased to see that this government is moving towards putting Ontario children first. The Ontario child benefit will be given to support any child from a low-income family whether or not his or her parents are working or receiving social assistance.

Later today, we will be debating this budget in further detail. Let me say that the present social assistance sys-

tem is not working in favour of Ontario children. It is a system that currently excludes the majority of children from receiving support.

ONTARIO PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise in the House today to talk about policy. In fact, it's about a lack of policy with regard to the members opposite.

Today's Pembroke Daily Observer raises the issue that the leader of the official opposition seems to come up short on a very necessary requirement of a leader, which is his policies. While the McGuinty government has been a leader in developing new, innovative ideas and legislation, the members opposite have been using every excuse they can to delay the release of their policy platform.

In the few so-called policies they have discussed so far, the Ontario Conservatives have pledged to cut \$2.6 billion from the health care system, take money from public health care and hand it over to for-profit-driven health care corporations, and take money from public schools and hand it over to private schools. We can't go back to the Harris days of cuts, damage and neglect, though that seems to be exactly what the Ontario Progressive Conservatives want to do.

What is more, the members opposite will be getting help from the right-wing radical Randy Hillier, who is quoted as saying, "[They] don't have their election platform outlined yet," but that he can help shape it.

The McGuinty Liberals are working hard to make Ontario stronger and give Ontarians access to more opportunities through providing strong leadership and effective policies. While the Tories have little to offer outside of cuts, we continue to move Ontario forward and to help Ontarians succeed.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to standing order 109(b).

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. McMeekin presents the committee's report. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. McMeekin: Yes. This cleans up committee assignments to various standing committees given the recent appointment of a new Minister of Revenue.

The Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 109(b), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to introduce some guests in the members' gallery: Robyn Henderson-Espinoza and Stephanie Huston from Chicago, Illinois. Robyn works for the Attorney General of Illinois. Welcome to Ontario.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to acknowledge some guests from Hamilton. They are striking workers from the FirstOntario Credit Union, and they're here to bring issue with their cause.

1350

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Joining us in the west gallery today, on the occasion of the tabling of the private member's bill honouring Pope John Paul II, are Eparchial Bishop John Pazak of the Slovak Byzantine Catholic Eparchy; Father Thomas Rosica, chief executive officer of Salt and Light Catholic television; Father Matthew Drury of St. Vladimir's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Thornhill; Mr. Neil McCarthy, representing His Grace Archbishop Thomas Collins of the Archdiocese of Toronto; and Mr. Joe Sinasac, the editor of the Catholic Register. Please welcome them.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Also joining us on the occasion of the introduction of the Pope John Paul II Day bill are Mr. Jesse Flis, former member of Parliament and first vice-chairman of the board of directors of the Pope John Paul II Care Centre, Copernicus Lodge; Mr. Vladislav Lizon, president of the Polish Canadian Congress; Mr. Ted Loyko, vice-president of the Polish Canadian Congress; Stanley Godzisz, general secretary of the Polish Canadian Congress; and Mr. Marek Goldyn, chairman of the Canadian-Polish Foundation. I would ask all members to join me in welcoming our guests.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

POPE JOHN PAUL II DAY ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LE JOUR
DU PAPE JEAN-PAUL II

Mr. Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 194, An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day /
Projet de loi 194, Loi proclamant le Jour du Pape Jean-Paul II.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Passing this bill into law will designate the second day of April of every year as Pope John Paul II Day in the province of Ontario. By doing so, this Legislature will not only honour the man who served as spiritual leader to millions in this province

and around the world, but will ensure that the values of compassion, respect and tolerance, values personified throughout his life, are contemplated and celebrated by the citizens of this province. It is my hope that by setting this day aside as proposed, every Ontarian, regardless of religion or culture, will be encouraged to embrace and to promote those values, with the result that we will indeed be strengthened as individuals, as a province and as a country.

I therefore ask all members to support this bill when it comes before this House next and that the government support its speedy passage into law.

FAMILY DAY ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LE JOUR
DE LA FAMILLE

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 195, An Act to proclaim Family Day / Projet de loi 195, Loi proclamant le Jour de la famille.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): The bill officially declares the third Monday of each February Family Day. I might add that this bill was brought to my attention by a third-year criminology student at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Alison Stycuk-Albrecht. She has worked in the field of social services and now is a legislative intern in my constituency office.

Research by the National Centre for Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University found that children who consistently eat dinner with their families are less likely to smoke, drink or use drugs. Other provinces—Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia—either have or are considering this legislation, along with other jurisdictions throughout the world. I would ask all members to support the initiative of this bill.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, April 2, 2007, Tuesday, April 3, 2007, and Wednesday, April 4, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1355 to 1400.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion 297. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gravelle, Michael	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Marsales, Judy	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Craiton, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Patten, Richard	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
DiNovo, Cheri	Martel, Shelley	Sterling, Norman W.
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Ferreira, Paul	Murdoch, Bill	Tory, John
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 44; the nays are 20.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMITÉ CONSULTATIF DU SPORT

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion):

It was only two weeks ago in a statement to the House when I congratulated Team Ontario on their impressive performance at the 2007 Canada Games in Whitehorse. For the eighth time, Team Ontario captured the Canada Games flag, and we are very proud of those young athletes.

I was proud to represent Premier McGuinty and the government of Ontario at the opening ceremonies, which showcased Ontarian athleticism at its best. All Ontarians and all of us in this House are proud of our amateur athletes for their performance, their ability and their dedication. Athletes, through their example, encourage and inspire us all to lead healthy, active lives.

The Ontario government is committed to providing the necessary support to help our athletes perform at their best. That is why today I'd like to take a moment to announce the appointment of 19 Ontarians to a new sport advisory committee for the Minister of Health Promotion. I'll have the privilege of working with this

highly respected group, and I've asked them to provide me with their expert advice. Our work will be aimed at building a stronger sport system and establishing Ontario's leadership in amateur sport.

L'idée d'un comité consultatif du sport provient d'un besoin d'étudier des moyens nouveaux et innovateurs de faire progresser le sport en Ontario. Le gouvernement McGuinty, dans la province de l'Ontario, reconnaît l'importance du sport et des loisirs. Nous offrons de nombreux programmes qui visent à aider nos athlètes à obtenir de bons résultats lors des compétitions à l'échelle nationale et internationale, et aussi à augmenter les taux de participation au sport et à l'activité physique chez les Ontariens.

One example is that Greg Sorbara, our Minister of Finance, reconfirmed our commitment to the Quest for Gold program, which this past year invested \$10 million in high-performance athletes, enhanced coaching and competitive opportunities, and received that budgetary commitment for the upcoming fiscal year. Other examples are the communities in action fund and the Sport for More program, which provide greater participation in sport and recreation throughout Ontario, a key goal of our Active 2010 strategy.

Our government also understands the importance of providing the community recreation infrastructure that is necessary for both high-performance athlete development and increased recreational participation, and has provided \$70 million in 2006-07.

While these initiatives are helpful, there is cause for concern. For instance, the number of athletes from Ontario on Olympic teams has steadily been declining. In 1984, for instance, the Winter Olympics held in Sarajevo, 52% of the team was comprised of athletes from Ontario. Since that time, the percentage of athletes from Ontario on winter Olympic teams has steadily reduced, with the most recent team, in Turin, having only 19% of our athletes coming from Ontario.

In an eight-year period, we saw a 42% decline in funding from the government. I'm proud to be part of a government that's seen a 134% increase in funding.

I'd like to introduce the members of the sport advisory committee. They're all located in the Speaker's gallery. Mentioning one or two sentences about these individuals does not do justice, so I apologize in advance, but such are the time constraints.

—Let me introduce an eminent sport specialist with a particular focus on women in sport, Dr. Julia Alleyne, if she could stand;

—One of Canada's most accomplished Olympic swimmers, who has returned home to Ontario after turning Australia's swim program into the best, winner of two gold Olympic medals, six world records in swimming, a member of the Order of Canada, Alex Baumann;

—Representing our provincial sport and multi-sport organizations, Mr. Jim Bradley—not that Jim Bradley; the better-looking Jim Bradley—president of the Sport Alliance of Ontario;

—Three-time wheelchair basketball Paralympics gold medalist Tracey Ferguson;

—The CEO of YMCA Ontario and president of the YMCA of Greater Toronto, Mr. Scott Haldane is with us;

—A leader in Canada's sport community, a former Olympic sailor, a past member of the International Olympic Committee, a member of the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame, Mr. Paul Henderson;

—A renowned basketball coach, an aboriginal sport advocate, and a teacher in the school system in Ontario, Mr. Gregory Henhawk;

—Canada's greatest pro baseball player, baseball hall of famer, Cy Young award winner, 20-game winner for six consecutive seasons, Mr. Fergie Jenkins;

—An accomplished national swimmer and curler, a board member of the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Coaching Association of Canada and the Special Olympics for Canada, the executive director of the Canadian Canoe Association—and we ran into each other at a swim meet at the Nepean Sportsplex this weekend where her daughter and son were competing—Anne Merklinger;

—A long-time national swim team member, Olympic and national participant and champion, winner of more than 70 international medals for Canada, a 30-time national champion, Ms. Joanne Malar;

—A multi-talented athlete, coach, and president of the Toronto Sports Council, University of Toronto Sports Hall of Fame inductee, and executive vice-president of the Toronto 2008 Olympic bid committee, Karen Pitre;

—An eminent industry supporter through his work on behalf of RBC Financial Group, a volunteer swim coach, the manager responsible for marketing campaigns for the 2010 Olympics and Paralympics, from RBC, Mr. Andrew Shibata;

—Vétérain champion national de trampoline et médaillé olympique, a three-time national champion, a bronze Olympic medallist, in the third year of a four-year program to become a doctor of chiropractic, M. Mathieu Turgeon;

—Known to millions of Canadians for his insightful, informative and emotional sport commentary, Canada's Outstanding Sportscaster eight times, with six Gemini Awards and two Foster Hewitt Awards, Mr. Canada, our voice at the Olympics with CTV and TSN, Brian Williams.

1410

Mr. Speaker, there are a few members who had to leave prematurely: Dr. Bruce Kidd, perhaps one of this country's greatest and most knowledgeable sports specialists, and to this day the Canadian junior men's record-holder for 5,000 metres, which still stands after 44 years, dean of the physical education program at the University of Toronto, who was with us this morning, and we thank him; also, an individual who was at our first meeting but couldn't make it today, a distinguished Toronto Sun journalist and sport authority, president of Sports Media Canada and member of Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, Mr. George Gross. Also not able to be here, a former city of Toronto commissioner and respected community leader, member of the Canadian Olympic Association and the Raptors Foundation, Mr. Joe Halstead.

We also had two members who were not able to attend. I want to particularly thank in absentia—she is in China—Mayor Hazel McCallion, who is a great defender particularly of women's hockey and of participation rates of women in various sports, and we thank Hazel very much for being with us in spirit; and sport marketing visionary Elliott Kerr of Landmark Sport Group, who regrettably had a death in the family on the weekend and is not able to be here, but we thank Elliott Kerr, who will be at our next meeting, in June.

As you can well imagine, we have been blessed by the voluntary participation and the insight of the members of the committee. We had a very good meeting. We have our work cut out for us because, as I said, we have not done a stellar job in the last several years in this province, but we're starting to turn the corner. We want to build a healthier, stronger Ontario, to give all Ontarians a chance to become more active and to achieve excellence, whether recreationally or competitively, and I thank these distinguished Canadians for their insight and their support of making sure we do the right thing for our young athletes in this great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): On behalf of my party, I would like to thank all of the very notable athletes and people who have been involved with athletics for their service to Ontario.

It might strike you that a member of the opposition is a little concerned when you are setting up advisory committees in the last six months of your mandate, but I must say that their advice will not only be listened to but acted on by Premier John Tory after the next election.

When I heard that the Minister of Health Promotion was going to speak today, I thought he was going to respond to the Ontario Health Quality Council, which just very recently—in fact, last week—came out with a very damning report of this government and its lack of attack on chronic diseases. This is their Ontario Health Quality Council, and what they said was that chronic diseases are taking up a huge amount of our health care budget. In fact, they are taking up 60% of that health care budget.

The report states that many of these chronic diseases are largely preventable if people subscribe to a healthy lifestyle that includes a clean environment, a nutritious diet and physical fitness. It goes on to say that efforts to prevent and manage this chronic disease are inconsistent and uncoordinated. Most patients with chronic conditions aren't encouraged to manage their own care or given written management plans, and the lack of electronic records means care is not organized and managed in the ways that give the best results.

I would have thought that now that we have gone through three and a half years of Liberal government we would get some answers with regard to chronic disease and the attack of chronic disease. Notwithstanding that, I want to thank the advisory committee. I hope their work will be fruitful in the future. At this stage, we are looking for results, and they are not there.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I only wanted to add to the very excellent comments of the member for Lanark–Carleton that I was very hurt, as a former commissioner of the CFL, that the minister did not mention that Brian Williams was also the host and front-face figure of the Grey Cup—that great Canadian tradition—for these last 25 years, until he made a change of employment.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On behalf of the New Democratic Party, I want to welcome the members of the advisory committee to Queen's Park. We recognize that the panel members are from all sectors of Ontario society. They have tremendous skills, talents and experience among them. Also the one thing they have in common is that they continue to make and they have made an enormous contribution in Ontario, in Canada, and some internationally, and so we thank them for their willingness to participate in a voluntary capacity in the way they have agreed to serve.

I understand that the mandate of the committee members is to “provide advice on promoting the benefits of both high performance and community participation in sport.” In that regard, an observation I'd like to make is that I think we require both a strengthening of the high performance system that's already in place for elite athletes who have already been identified as such, and we also need to broaden the pool of potential elite athletes at the other end by focusing on children who are involved in both school activities and in community sports.

I make this recommendation, then: that in Ontario we need to have physical education teachers in all of our schools, and we need to have physical education made mandatory right through secondary school, because it is not. Otherwise, we are not going to be able to look to the school system as a potential environment to spur on and identify athletes. In reality, however, the percentage of schools with physical education teachers today still remains below 1998 levels, and there is something wrong with that.

Secondly, because physical education is only mandatory up to and including grade 9, when it is not mandatory, after grade 9, there is a huge drop in the number of secondary school students who participate in gym and then subsequently who participate in intramural and interschool sports programs.

I just want to give you some results to show how dismal the situation is. This is a reference to a 2004 study of 474 schools in Ontario. It says the following:

“Curriculum-based physical education ... classes in grade 9 were reported to be offered in all schools and these classes in grades 10, 11 and 12 were offered in almost all schools. Student enrolment in PE decreased from grades 9 to 12” in these percentages: 97.9% to 49.6% to 43.3% to 35.9% by grade. “About two thirds (65.5%) of the schools had an intramural program” but only 15% of students participated in it. And 97.2% of the schools had an interschool sports program, but only 25% of students were participating in those. So it's very clear that we need to increase student participation in physical education, intramural programs and interschool sports

programs, and the way we need to do it is to make physical education mandatory right through to grade 12.

1420

I also think we can increase the pool of potential athletes by focusing on those kids who are participating in the community sports system. One thing we need to do—and I hope the committee is going to have an opportunity to look at this—is to remove those barriers which prevent children from participating in community sports. Those barriers can include some of the following: the need in the community for the physical facility to deliver sports in the first place, be it a soccer field, an arena or a pool. Another barrier could be the costs associated with the community use of the facilities that do exist and how prohibitive the fees might be to use the arena, the pool and the soccer field. There can also be a barrier around the fees associated with membership on the sports teams in the community and how prohibitive those membership fees might be for parents. Finally, there are the costs involved with equipment needed to participate in the first place. I understand clearly that that differs depending on the sports your children are involved in. Those fees can be prohibitive as well, especially if your kids have more than one and they continue to participate year after year.

As a parent of two children who play hockey, one of whom has played on a select team for the last two years and will try out again in the next couple of weeks for another, I can tell you that the fees are quite high. We are lucky as parents that we can afford them, but there are lots of kids out there who are equally talented who just cannot and lose that opportunity to participate.

Let me close by saying this: Ontario already has wonderful, talented amateur athletes. They are very committed and very dedicated and we salute them. But we'd like to see them in even greater numbers in Ontario. I hope that the committee and the government will look at some of the recommendations I have made to try to increase the pool, particularly at the bottom end, with those kids coming in both through the school system and through community activities. I want to wish the committee members well in their deliberations and plans and hope that they will be able to get us where we want to be.

VISITOR

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Mr. Speaker, I beg the indulgence of the House to introduce Lucille Walwich, who taught for 47 years with the Scarborough board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Could the Premier tell us how

many meetings Don Guy, his former chief of staff and the current head of his re-election campaign, attended with officials of the lottery corporation, the minister responsible for lotteries or his staff or the Premier and his staff to discuss any aspect of this current lottery scandal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I think what Ontarians remain interested in is the Ombudsman's report, the specific recommendations that were laid out in that report. They are, I think, very pleased to see our continuing resolve and determination to move ahead with each and every one of those separate recommendations. I think as well that Ontarians distinguish between the approach and the perspective brought by my friend opposite and the objective, non-partisan, dispassionate, responsible approach laid out for us by the Ombudsman. We take his advice very seriously, we thank him for his advice and we intend to move ahead on his very specific recommendations.

Mr. Tory: I thought the Premier was going to describe the dispassionate, objective etc. approach taken by his government, and fortunately he didn't. We are just interested in the truth. The Premier has not answered the question, which was very specific. We know that the Dalton McGuinty government did absolutely nothing between April 2006 and October 2006 while thousands of Ontario people were ripped off for the winnings they should have had from the lottery corporation.

Our sources indicate that Don Guy—and we are not dealing here with just some guy off the street; this is your main man, the big cheese, the grand fromage of your political organization—was involved in meetings that involved spinning the story and perhaps covering up things that shouldn't be covered up.

We're asking for a serious answer to a question as to who knew what, when they knew it and what they did about it.

My question again is, how many meetings, if any, did Don Guy, your grand fromage, attend with officials of the lottery corporation, the minister's office responsible for lotteries or your own office about the lottery scandal? How many meetings: a simple question.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition has a different approach and a different priority, but we're not going to take our eye off the ball on this side of the House. We're focused on the public interest; we're focused on doing what the public needs done. We'll focus specifically on the Ombudsman's report and the very specific recommendations he laid out.

I referenced this last week, but I think one of the most important recommendations has to do with the fact that, according to the Ombudsman—and an observation with which I agree entirely—you can't really have an OLG which is responsible for the sale of the tickets, when it has a direct interest in the sale of the tickets, while taking responsibility for overseeing those very sales. He recommends that we remove that responsibility from the OLG and that we give it to a separate authority. I think that is eminently reasonable, and I think that recommendation,

in and of itself, will go a long way to restoring confidence in the integrity of our lottery and gaming system.

Mr. Tory: If there's nothing to hide here, then I can't possibly imagine why the Premier wouldn't simply answer the question as to whether the grand fromage, the big cheese, Mr. Don Guy, was at these meetings or not. It's obvious: If you're not answering the question, if you're not indicating that there's nothing to hide and he never was at any meeting about the lottery scandal, then you should just get up and say so.

I'm going to assume that the Premier has chosen to respond to my questions in a very specific way and for a specific reason, and that's because Mr. Guy was in fact at these meetings. So I want to ask him, if Mr. Guy was at these meetings, does he think that's appropriate, that on a scandal like this, involving people being ripped off for their money—a government matter that involves all kinds of people looking into this—his top political man should be over there stage-managing the whole thing? Do you think it's right or not?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: In addition to having had the benefit of the Ombudsman's interest in this matter, his review and investigation effectively into this matter, we've gone beyond that and turned this matter over to the Ontario Provincial Police.

In terms of the approach that we brought when it came to dealing with the Ombudsman in this matter, he specifically addressed that in his report. He said, "This is the kind of support and commitment on behalf of government which is essential if we are to move forward to restore integrity and trust in the lottery system. I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change."

I leave it to the people of Ontario to draw their own conclusions with respect to who has a disinterested perspective on this. Again, I say to the people of Ontario that we will move ahead in their interest by following the Ombudsman's very specific recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question?

Mr. Tory: My question is for the Premier again. And to be noted: no answer with respect to Mr. Guy.

Just to quote something else the Ombudsman had to say, "There are disturbing signs that the culture that led to the difficulties in the first place is not gone. It was not conscience or self-criticism that smartened the OLG up—it was a public relations nightmare, played out on the public airwaves despite its best efforts at suppression," and on it goes from there.

My question to the Premier on the same subject is this: His continued refusal to answer questions spawns more questions. Last week, we made another simple request: Would you make available all the documents, e-mails, briefings, calendars and so on from your office and from the minister's office to show us whether or not there were people who were involved? Were there people in

meetings? Were there people who got briefings on this at a time other than what we have been told?

The process of FOI and order paper questions takes months. If you have nothing to hide and if you want confidence restored in the lotteries on the part of the public, why won't you simply stand up today and say that you will allow that information to be made public immediately so we can all see what went on, and hopefully everybody can get back to normal—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'll remind my colleague that the Ombudsman's report was instigated by a matter that arose on the former government's watch. I would suggest to him that if he has a keen interest in learning about the relationship between the OLG and the government of the day, he need look no further than one seat over to his left and ask the former minister about that very specific relationship.

1430

Again, we have received some very specific recommendations from the Ombudsman. They're laid out in considerable detail. The OLG is already acting on those which were directed to it. We are acting on those which were specifically directed to us in our capacity as the government of Ontario. From Ontarians' perspective, I understand that they're prepared to play the game, even though the odds are long, but what they're looking to us to do is to ensure that the game is fair, and we will uphold their interest in this regard.

Mr. Tory: The whole point here is, when you had the responsibility, you and your government, to make sure the game was fair, we believe you turned your back on it. We want the public to be able to see the documents and the memos to see exactly what you did when people were being ripped off and when reports were coming of people being ripped off.

Surely the Premier understands why this looks fishy. The minister says he knew nothing about insider wins and yet there are e-mails in his office. He claims to take action only after the story breaks on television and he gets caught. It's the only time he does a single thing about this.

Meanwhile, over at the lottery corporation—we can get an idea of how well things are running over there—they have a 60% increase in the people making more than \$100,000 since 2003; unbelievable. Now we hear that your very own chief of staff, your chief political guy, seems to have been involved. You won't tell us that he wasn't at any meetings, so we can only assume that he was.

You say you have great confidence—as we all do—in the objectivity of the Ombudsman. If you don't want to make all these documents public, why don't you turn them over to him and let him have a look at all the memos and e-mails and see what he has to say?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition knows that we have, of our own accord, asked the Ontario Provincial Police to look at this matter. We've provided them with the necessary documents, and I have

every confidence that they will do what they think is appropriate in the circumstances.

I'll also again remind the leader of the official opposition that he might look no further than a column that appeared in one of today's daily papers, where a question is asked, "What did Hudak do as the Edmonds case began to unfold? Nothing, says Hudak, because 'we had no knowledge of it.'"

Again, to the leader of the official opposition, he needs to get a better understanding about the relationship between the government of the day and the OLG. There is an important distance that separates the two for very good public policy reasons.

We received a good report from the Ombudsman. We will act on his report.

Mr. Tory: You are the Premier; the minister is the minister; the minister appoints the board; the board reports to the minister. All we're asking is, not what knowledge people had years ago: What knowledge did this minister have in this circumstance at this time?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: Real leadership means getting answers to people who do want to know, as you yourself said, that they can play these games with confidence and know that all of those involved in any aspect of this whole thing have actually left their offices—they've resigned or been asked to leave—so that people can have confidence again. Instead, you bob and you weave and you deny and you don't answer the simplest question about who might have been at a meeting or not, or make available the documents.

When you don't agree to make these documents available to the public or, as I've suggested, to the Ombudsman—in whom we all have great confidence in terms of his objectivity; you describe him as non-partisan, independent and objective—people are only left, as you say, to draw their own conclusions about why you won't make those documents available. Why won't you make them available so people can get their confidence restored in these lotteries and we can all see who knew what and when they knew it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The approach brought by the official opposition was described as being "gotcha" politics at its worst." I'll leave it to them to pursue their particular style of politics, but we will remain focused on the public interest. I'll leave it to my friend opposite to describe a double standard, one that would not apply to them in government but which now he would have apply to us in government.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): His nose is growing.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It seems to me that the lady doth protest too much. I hear some howls of displeasure coming from former minister Hudak.

We will keep our eye focused very much on the greater public interest. The public interest demands that we adhere to the very specific recommendations laid out by the Ombudsman. I think it also demands that we invite the OPP to consider whether or not they might have a matter here which warrants their interest. We will do whatever is necessary to ensure that people who put down their money can have confidence in the integrity of their lottery and gaming system.

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): My question is to the Premier. This weekend, the Ombudsman told Global TV's Focus Ontario that he is doubtful your approach to Lottogate will shed any more light on what really transpired. The reality is this: Hundreds, if not thousands, of hard-working Ontarians got cheated out of millions of dollars of lottery winnings, and the only way they'll get answers that they deserve about who knew what and who knew when is if the minister releases his briefing books, his e-mails and his records.

Premier, if you really want to get to the bottom of all this, if you have nothing to hide, order your minister to table those records in this House today. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): The member would be well familiar with the fact that we've had an all-party legislative committee, we've had the Ombudsman, we've had KPMG, and now we have the Ontario Provincial Police who are looking at the matters in front of them.

The Ombudsman in fact comments, and he says in his report on page 68—and I would quote it to the member—“I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change.”

The responsible thing to do is to embrace the Ombudsman's report and recommendations—that's what this government has done, that's what real leadership is—and in fact to restore Ontarians' trust and confidence in their corporation. That's precisely what has happened. That is the undertaking that I took to this House when the revelations and allegations were made by the Fifth Estate. I'm very proud that we finally have a government which is prepared to take this kind of action, as opposed to what we've seen previously, where others swept this under the rug or put it away in a closet and were afraid.

Mr. Ferreira: Ontarians are sick and tired of the four-times-per-week Caplan comedy hour. They want answers from the top.

To the Premier: This is about your lack of leadership, about you sticking your head in the sand instead of protecting lottery consumers, and this is about fairness for people who were cheated out of millions of dollars—Ontarians who were cheated. Today, the respected independent Consumers' Association of Canada called for a judicial inquiry into Lottogate to “clear the air.”

Premier, if you have nothing to hide, will you call a judicial inquiry? Will you do it?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I want to follow up on the recommendations that the Ombudsman and KPMG made, some 60 in total. The member would want to know that 17 of those recommendations have already been implemented. I have an opportunity to list those to the member opposite.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre needs to withdraw that.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Withdrawn.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Twenty-five of the recommendations will be complete by the end of June and the additional 18 have begun and will be implemented as quickly as possible. I am working with my colleague the Minister of Government Services.

Unfortunately, the flaw that was put in place when the New Democrats set up this arrangement was to have a corporation in place with both retailer-operator, judge-jury investigation. As the Ombudsman indicates, you need proper oversight independent of the operator-retailer function. That's precisely why my colleague Minister Phillips, the Minister of Government Services, has begun the steps, has engaged the Ombudsman, I know has met with—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Ferreira: Ontarians are asking for briefing books on this, not ancient history books. I'm going to go back to the Premier.

Premier, no one has looked at the minister's files. No one has seen them. No one has looked at his e-mails. Instead of shining a light on this matter, you're allowing your minister to operate under a veil of secrecy. A judicial inquiry would make all of this public and give people the answers they deserve. The Consumers' Association of Canada wants a judicial inquiry. Consumers who were cheated out of millions of dollars deserve it.

Premier, will you call a judicial inquiry into your \$100-million Lottogate scandal?

1440

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The Ombudsman is a non-partisan, unbiased, independent officer of the Legislature. He had a very public report. I commend it to the member. I hope you'll take the opportunity to read it. He made some very serious allegations in his news conference, and that is why, following that, I directed that all of the files that were reviewed by the Ombudsman be forwarded to the Ontario Provincial Police. They are the appropriate authority to make a determination into the allegations, to do the proper work and determine what the next step should be. I trust the Ontario Provincial Police. I trust Chief Fantino. I trust those who are responsible to look into these matters and do the right thing and take the next appropriate steps. I'm surprised that members opposite don't feel the same and don't have the same confidence in the police. I know that Ontarians don't agree with the position of the member opposite that our police cannot be

trusted to look into these matters. I know they will make the proper determination. I look forward—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): A question for the Premier: Premier, the environmental assessment process is supposed to protect the environment for Ontario families, but companies that want to make money burning garbage say that protecting the environment costs too much. Last week, you brought in a so-called streamlined process to make it easier to burn garbage. In fact, some projects won't have to proceed with an assessment at all. But you went the extra mile for one company. You went the extra mile for Plasco in Ottawa. In May 2006, at a cabinet meeting, you exempted Plasco from its legal requirement to conduct an environmental assessment on its new plant in Ottawa. Why, Premier, did you make that decision?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm pleased to have a chance to talk about the tools that we're providing municipalities so that they can better manage their municipal waste. As we have said many times in the past, we are more than willing to respond to our municipal leaders and their calls for additional ways to manage their residual waste. But it is imperative to put in context for my friends in opposition that this is about disposal. In so many instances, our first priority is diversion. In supplementary answers I look forward to talking to you about the many steps that we have taken with respect to diversion.

Mr. Tabuns: It is true that the minister is trying to create a diversion, but I have a question for the Premier. Premier, Rod Bryden is the CEO of Plasco. He's a long-time active Liberal, head of Stéphane Dion's transition team and the single biggest donor to your leadership campaign. He has admitted that if the law had been followed and an environmental assessment had been carried out, Plasco's garbage-burning plant "might never have been approved." So why are you allowing this company to burn garbage without a proper environmental assessment? Question for you, Premier.

Hon. Ms. Broten: I continue to be shocked by the campaign of misinformation that comes across from the other side of the House. At the end of the day, there are rules in this province with respect to the air standards that every single business operation must adhere to. Every single facility, no matter what the approach, whether it is plasma gasification or any other type of industrial unit in this province, needs to live up to those air standards, which are some of the toughest in the world, and our government has taken significant steps forward on and improved those steps that were not taken for more than 25 years. We continue to move those standards forward. At each and every instance, those who are knowledgeable

about the new technology that exists around the world say it is incumbent on a government that hopes to provide municipalities with the tools that they need for us to have an open mind to examine that new technology.

I say to the opposition and I say to all Ontarians, no facility will be built in this province unless it meets our tough and rigid air standards and our tough standards with regard to—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tabuns: Ontario families don't believe snake oil pitches when they hear them from any minister of the crown or from the Premier. They don't believe that a magic box has been invented that burns garbage without creating pollution. Other jurisdictions have shut down these so-called magic boxes—the ones that on paper were supposed to burn garbage without creating pollution. They've shut them down because they've consistently broken local emission and pollution laws. Ontario families were counting on you to divert waste from landfill, not divert it into the hands of Liberal insiders who are going to make a profit by burning it.

Premier, how do you justify changing the law that protects Ontario's environment so that it's easier to burn garbage?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I know that the NDP is ideologically opposed to the examination of any new technology and it is their desire to continue to scaremonger and keep their head in the sand. That is not the approach that our government is taking. Our government is saying disposal options may be available to municipalities to pursue but they will meet our tough standards; they will have consultation with the public. If you examine the regulations that were put forward, you will see, sir, that there are 14 steps to that, and there are a number of opportunities for the communities to have a dialogue, as they should. These are only one of a few new tools that we have provided to municipalities so that we can progress into the 21st century and we do not become a jurisdiction and continue to be a jurisdiction that foists our waste problem on others in Michigan. That was yesterday. Today we are moving forward, working with municipalities to have long-term sustainable solutions that are good for the environment, good for our air shed and will help municipalities manage the waste that their community generates.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I have a question for the Premier. Last week, the Toronto Sun carried an article entitled "How the Grits Tried to Spin a Scandal," and it told the story of high-paid Liberal spin doctors Warren Kinsella and Jim Warren meeting to discuss ways they could disparage the CBC's Fifth Estate findings about the rip-off of millions of dollars from lottery ticket purchasers in the province of Ontario. We've now found out that your former chief of staff, the

head of your re-election campaign, Don Guy, was also a part of that process. You've refused to answer my leader John Tory's questions regarding that.

I'm going to try it once again. Why in the world would the head of your re-election campaign team be taking part in this kind of a meeting?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I had a chance last week to ask Mr. Runciman, the member from Leeds–Grenville, a question back. In the case of Bob Edmonds, the unfortunate Ontarian, a cancer-surviving senior from Coboconk, Ontario—Mr. Runciman was the chair of the executive council of cabinet. I have stood and apologized for, unfortunately, Mr. Edmonds being treated in a most disrespectful manner.

I ask Mr. Runciman again: Will you stand up, do the right thing and apologize for the way that Mr. Edmonds was treated by your government, by folks who were your colleagues? I think that Mr. Runciman should do the right thing, should stand up and should apologize to Mr. Edmonds. I have done so on behalf of the province of Ontario. I know that former president and CEO Mr. Duncan Brown did the same. I think it is only appropriate under the circumstances for—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Runciman: The minister will get lots of chances to ask me questions starting in November.

With Minister Caplan in charge, the odds of winning a lottery in Ontario are the same whether you buy a ticket or don't. That's a reality. No one is answering the question and I think it's extremely important. Hopefully, the people of Ontario are listening to this. Instead of dealing with a real problem, where thousands and thousands of Ontarians were being ripped off of millions and millions of dollars, they're playing political games. They have the head of the campaign team in these meetings to come up with ways they can fool the public that there's no problem—to save the revenues, to save the reputations, to protect the hides of Liberal politicians.

We all demand a right to know: Why was the head of that campaign in there, in meetings dealing with the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp?

1450

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, when Ontarians look back at the performance of the previous government—Mr. Runciman and his colleagues, Mr. Hudak and others—I don't think they're going to want to go back to those days. I think they want a government that rolls up its sleeves and does something about these problems.

The Ombudsman could not be more clear when he says in his press conference, "I conclude that they"—the OLG—"put profits ahead of public service. I think there was a point, a crossroads, in 2002.... At that point, the OLG could have gone two ways. It could have said, 'We'll apply the law and take the measures to act dili-

gently.' One month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the" superior court "didn't apply. Then it became a slippery slope."

That was the legacy of Mr. Runciman and the former Progressive Conservative government. This government, on the other hand, has shone a light on this corporation, has taken the responsible action—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Hard-working Torontonians got a pretty nasty little surprise last week. They learned they're potentially getting an 8% property tax increase if you don't come up with the \$71 million that the city says you owe them. The city's budget chief—a very good Liberal, she is—says that it's all because your government refuses to pay its bills for downloaded provincial programs, cost-shared agreements.

Minister, explain to Toronto's hard-working property owners why your government has no money to pay for your own programs and the debts that you owe but you have plenty of money to give yourself a 31% pay raise.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I am thrilled that my friend from the New Democratic Party has finally asked a question on the budget, and this one in particular. I was particularly pleased at how much the budget responded to the needs of the people of this great city of Toronto. I want to tell you, we are providing Toronto's businesses with a \$231-million reduction in business education taxes. As well, so many of the children who will be the recipients of the Ontario child benefit live right here in this city; so many of the people who will be getting the rent supplements.

Finally, I just note for my friend that, over the course of the past three and a half years, our assistance directly to the government of the city of Toronto has increased by some 300% over what existed under the previous—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Prue: I hardly believe the answer I just got, but I'm going to try again. Minister, because of your budget, Torontonians are facing an 8% tax increase with absolutely no increase in services and, in some places, decreases in those services. At the same time, you have chosen to give hundreds of millions of dollars to banks and insurance companies through your capital tax giveaway. I'm absolutely positive that this would go a much further and longer way towards uploading the downloaded social programs that you yourself had promised to do.

I repeat: Toronto's budget chief, a very good Liberal, says that your government owes the city hundreds of millions of dollars for social service costs and, in particular, \$71 million for a debt that you haven't paid. Why have you chosen to shovel money hand over fist to the

banks and insurance companies while refusing to help out Toronto's hard-pressed taxpayers?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I don't know why they do these set-up questions.

Because of our budget, the city of Toronto will be receiving \$222 million to assist in public transit, and that's above and beyond \$800 million to build a new subway up to York region. Because of our budget, the city of Toronto will be receiving \$362 million in gas tax money for public transit. Because of our budget, hundreds of millions of dollars will go into new affordable housing and social housing in the city of Toronto. Because of our budget, \$5.5 million will go towards Luminato, the great new festival of arts and creativity that will take place in the city of Toronto. And if you would permit, I could go on and on and on.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Minister of Labour. As you know, I have a large number of injured workers in and around my riding. I have heard, in different capacities for many years, their heartbreaking stories, their sometimes frustrating efforts, their sense of being forgotten and sometimes desperate, left behind by a system that no longer seemed to be working for them and supporting them properly.

In the government's recent budget, there are a number of significant measures, changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, which go a long way to repairing the damage done under two previous governments. After years of pleading for changes to unfair formulas and undignified language in the WSIA, injured workers finally have something real and substantial. But this is a group that's not accustomed to getting good news: substantial, structural good news that truly recognizes their plight. So could the minister please outline for us the significant action that was taken in our budget to continue to restore dignity and respect for our injured workers in Ontario?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to thank the member for her advocacy on behalf of injured workers. It's something that they can be very proud of, knowing that they've got an individual like her out there for them.

We are committed to making sure that there is a brighter future for injured workers in this province. Some 155,000 injured workers in this province have been left behind by two previous governments. This is the first real increase in benefits that injured workers have seen in over 12 years, because over the next 18 months injured workers are going to see a 7.5% increase in their benefits, an increase that is long overdue.

As well, we're going to provide greater flexibility to the WSIB in how they deal with injured workers. We're investing \$810,000 in the Office of the Worker Adviser. We're changing deeming. We're changing the lock-in rules and lump sum payment. But I think it's very important who created the Friedland formula. In 1994, the NDP created that—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Mossop: I am very heartened to hear about these changes and I am proud to be part of the government that has moved forward in this area to do right by people and also keep the books balanced. Last week's budget didn't just address concerns around injured workers in this province; there were further increases to the minimum wage, a third increase in social assistance rates, further investments in affordable housing, and the new \$2.1-billion Ontario child care benefit, which will help nearly 1.3 million children in this province annually.

I know that the proposed changes to the WSIA are to be funded by the WSIB, and even before the budget details came out, the WSIB had already increased certain benefits. I'd like the minister—who, by the way, has been to my riding a couple of times, as was the previous Minister of Labour, to meet with my injured workers—to explain those changes in the WSIB as well.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I want to thank the member for her question. As a government, we are committed to having a well-funded, accountable WSIB. The WSIB plays an extremely important role within the business community, the construction community and others in this province.

We recognize that there were some challenges at the WSIB. That's why, in 2004, we initiated an audit that looked at a number of areas within the WSIB. A number of recommendations were brought forward, and many of those recommendations, with the budget that's been introduced, are going to be implemented. I'm proud of that.

As well, we were able to move forward with certain increases in benefits in both 2006 and 2007 for such things as clothing allowances and guide dog allowances. These were things that were left behind. It has amazed me since we've taken office at how the NDP and the Conservatives abandoned and ignored injured workers. That is not going to continue in the future. We're going to work with injured workers and make sure that they aren't abandoned like they—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

1500

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a question to the minister responsible for lotteries. Minister, we've been asking questions in this House, we've submitted freedom of information requests, and we've put questions on the order paper—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing the member for Oak Ridges. He does not sit that far from me, so that means it's very difficult to hear in here. All members need to be able to hear a member place a question and a minister respond.

Member for Oak Ridges.

Mr. Klees: Notwithstanding all of those requests, Minister, you continue to refuse to release the files related to the lottery scandal. That continued refusal is causing some people to raise their eyebrows and to ask, "What are you hiding?" The Premier's refusal to deny Don Guy's involvement in all of this suggests that there may well be a cover-up afoot.

My question to the minister: If everything was above board, why do you continue to refuse to make those documents public?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I would say to the member from Oak Ridges, unlike the partisan perspective that all members of this House bring, the Ombudsman—an independent, non-partisan, unbiased officer of this Legislature—has a different perspective. I would read page 68 from the report that the Ombudsman tabled for the member, where the Ombudsman says, "I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change."

Regrettably, past governments chose, at the crossroads that the Ombudsman described in 2002—this member, in fact, sat at the executive council of the province of Ontario—to look the other way, chose to sweep these matters under the rug, chose not to do what this government has done, which has been responsive and open: to shine a light on and to roll up its sleeves to fix the problems that it inherited. That's the response—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Klees: Minister, you should know, having been involved in politics for some time, that it's much better to simply come forward with a straight response and the answer, because the more you dance around this, the more questionable your response is.

You continue to refer to the Ombudsman. This is the Legislature asking you a question. We as legislators are asking you to release certain information. The Ombudsman may well be happy with your conduct; we're not. We're saying to you, "Give us the information." Why will you not do that? If you won't give it to the House, give it to the Ombudsman, who you like so much. Let him know what the documents are, who did what, when they did it and why. Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, it goes well beyond simply the Ombudsman. We've had an all-party legislative committee, chaired by a member of the member from Oak Ridges' caucus, look at government agencies, including Ontario Lottery and Gaming.

Even beyond that, I say to the member opposite, we've asked that all files be directed to the Ontario Provincial Police, so that they can review these matters and make the appropriate determination as to what the next step should be as to the allegations that the Ombudsman made earlier in his Monday press conference. I'm surprised that the member opposite, as much respect as I do have for him, does not have confidence in the Ontario Provincial Police, in their ability to get to the bottom of

matters, in their ability to determine what the next step should be, in their impartial, unbiased view of these matters.

I understand that the member opposite has partisan views; I do as well, as do members of the third party. All members of this place do, and that is acceptable. That's why—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

RENTAL ACCOMMODATION

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I'm going to make him earn his paycheck this week.

Minister, there are tenants across Ontario who are forced to live in deplorable conditions, with cockroach and mouse infestations, sickness-inducing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. The government House leader.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): The backbench has taken over the NDP.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health Promotion, I will not warn you again.

The member for York South–Weston.

Mr. Ferreira: The question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. There are tenants across Ontario who are forced to live in deplorable conditions, with cockroach and mouse infestations, sickness-inducing mould and a lack of basic safety devices such as window screens and fire detectors.

Your party promised in 2003 that you would protect tenants from bad landlords. Instead, you voted against my motion on Thursday to implement a landlord licensing system across the province that would ensure tough standards for rental accommodation and crack down on big landlords who fail to maintain their buildings. Minister, why did the McGuinty Liberals choose cockroaches over people last week?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): First of all, I can assure this member that we on this side of the House are working constantly to improve the quality of life of all Ontarians, have been working at it for the last three and a half years and will continue to do so.

But the member opposite—and I welcome him to the House, by the way—doesn't realize that all municipalities have been given the power and the authority in both the city of Toronto through the City of Toronto Act and municipally across the rest of the province through the Municipal Act to set up this kind of licensing system if they now want to do so. We feel that this is best left up to our local municipal counterparts, who serve their communities to the best of their ability, to determine whether or not a licensing system for housing should be set up.

We believe in local government, we respect the local councils and we know they will do the right thing. If they feel it's best to set up a licensing system for their own communities, they will do so.

Mr. Ferreira: Minister, in your very own riding of Kingston and the Islands, where affordable rental housing is tough to come by, tenants have been put through the wringer by greedy, negligent apartment building landlords. In one case, a Kingston tenant fought for many years to have essential repairs made to her apartment, which had traces of dangerous toxic mould. Based on her experience, this tenant, and rightly so, refers to the Liberal government's system of helping tenants as the "Ontario landlord protection agency."

Minister, why won't you offer real protection to tens of thousands of Ontarians who have been victimized just like your very own constituents?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As this member well knows, the Residential Tenancies Act, which came into existence on January 1 this past year, has gone a long way in to equalize the opportunities available to both landlords and tenants to deal with disputes. It's a much fairer system than the system that existed before that. Every tenant has an opportunity to come before that board to raise any issues they may have with the landlord.

It is working well. The system has been approved, it's been applauded across this province by both tenants and landlords, and we feel that the new landlord and tenant legislation, through the Residential Tenancies Act, will address the kinds of issues he's addressing here today.

PROTECTION FOR SENIORS' INCOMES

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. Minister, seniors are an active and an important demographic in our province. In the very near future, as baby boomers hit 65, their numbers will be even more significant.

I've often had the chance to meet with seniors' groups in my constituency of Willowdale. They consistently raise issues specific to post-retirement. I've learned that as we age, our needs change. Those approaching retirement want to know that their pensions are secure. They want to enjoy this stage of their lives with peace of mind.

1510

Minister, how does this budget address the needs of seniors across Ontario? Specifically, what is this government doing to give pensioners more flexibility and certainty about their retirement incomes?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I want to thank the member for Willowdale, Mr. Zimmer, for an exceedingly good question this afternoon. I'm pleased to rise in this House and advise him of the following: The government has taken a number of major steps forward in helping Ontario's seniors gain greater flexibility in managing their retirement income, as well as better value for their tax dollar.

First, we are creating a new life income fund that would replace existing locked-in retirement income funds and would permit pensioners to unlock up to 25% of the funds held in these accounts. This will result in increased flexibility in managing their retirement income.

Second, we're allowing senior couples to split certain types of pension income for Ontario income tax purposes. This would provide Ontario income tax savings of about \$170 million to Ontario couples with eligible pension income in 2007. For example, a senior couple with a combined income of \$50,000 annually will save \$980 a year in personal income tax in Ontario.

Mr. Zimmer: Thank you, Minister, for clarifying that issue. Another issue I'm worried about is that some retirees, unfortunately, find themselves not adequately prepared for retirement. They're going to encounter real financial difficulties in the face of unexpected costs. What strategy has this government created to assist vulnerable citizens who are facing significant challenges in their retirement years for which they're not properly prepared?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Again, I would like to thank the member for his question. In addition to the measures I have just described, our government is conscious of the need to assist our seniors of more modest means. This is why we are enriching the Ontario property and sales tax credit for seniors. We are doing this by raising the income threshold from \$22,250 to \$23,090 for seniors who qualify for the credit so that more seniors will qualify. That means that in 2007, about 745,000 seniors will benefit from an estimated \$104 million in enrichments to this tax credit made by our government since 2004.

We first increased the underlying property tax credit amount for low- and middle-income seniors in 2004. We're bringing in a fairer property tax system with the introduction of a four-year re-assessment cycle and a phase-in of any assessment increases in order to provide greater predictability and stability for our seniors in Ontario.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean-Carleton): My question is for the minister responsible for lotteries. Last week, we learned there was a 60% increase in the number of people at OLG who earn over \$100,000. This is shameful. It's shocking, given that all this time this government was doing nothing to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario.

The bloating of the "100 G" club at OLG is just another example of this government's misguided priorities. Instead of working to fix the problems, they work to cover them up. Why else would Don Guy, the Premier's former chief of staff and head of the re-election campaign, be involved in a meeting on this? My question is simply this: Does the minister think this is the appropriate sort of thing to be done by the Liberals?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): One hundred and forty of the 7,800 Ontario Lottery and Gaming employees earn more than \$100,000. It's about 1.8% of total staff, well below the public sector average of 6%. I should note that Ontario Lottery and Gaming is

large; it's a \$6-billion corporation. I do believe that the salaries are in line.

I would note for the member from Nepean—Carleton that between the years 1999 and 2003, the percentage of those going on the salary disclosure list rose 310%. So if the member has some condemnation of a modest increase, I wonder what her comments were when her colleagues were in charge and at the helm of Ontario Lottery and Gaming. I'd love to hear the member's characterization and rationalization of Tim Hudak, Bob Runciman, Frank Klees, Liz Witmer, Norm Sterling—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The minister would know that you need to refer to members by their riding names, not their proper names.

Supplementary.

Ms. MacLeod: The minister's either in charge of his department or not, and I think he doesn't want to be today. He doesn't want to be in charge of his department. But maybe he'll change his mind once he realizes what people in the real world are thinking about him sitting under a cloud of controversy at the cabinet table.

Here's an e-mail I received from one of my constituents in Nepean—Carleton just last week who calls the minister a "big winner" who "gets to keep his cushy job by pulling a Sergeant Schultz" and saying "I know nothing."

Minister, your staff knew about the scandal months ago, yet you claim you knew nothing. People have lost faith in the integrity of the lottery system. The Ombudsman is still investigating further possibilities of victimization by your department—and the list goes on and on and on.

Minister, do you think it's appropriate for your party's chief election planner to have been involved in this?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The Ombudsman disagrees with you and Joe Varner. The Ombudsman disagrees with members opposite when he says, "I conclude that they"—the OLG—"put profits ahead of public service. I think there was a point, a crossroads, in 2002"—and I believe that's when Ms. MacLeod was a staffer then in the government. "At that point, the OLG could have gone two ways. It could have said, 'We'll apply the law and take the measures to act diligently.' One month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the Supreme Court didn't apply. Then it became a slippery slope."

That was the approach of that government: to hide things away, to sweep it under the rug, to put it in a closet. The approach of this government is to shine a light, to roll up our sleeves and to fix the problems left by, unfortunately, a regime that was tired and out of gas.

We have already implemented 17 of the 60 recommendations from both the Ombudsman and KPMG; 25 more by the end of June, and the remaining 18 are ongoing.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: He alluded to the fact that I was a staffer of the previous Conservative administration in 2002—

The Speaker: New question.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, 70 workers—mostly women workers—from FirstOntario Credit Union have been on strike for almost six months. The strike could have been resolved a long time ago except that FSCO interfered and permitted FirstOntario Credit Union to contravene its bylaws and delay an annual general meeting until 60 days after the workers returned to work. The McGuinty government's licence to delay that pivotal meeting has enabled FirstOntario to foot-drag ever since, giving management an upper hand in this dispute.

Minister, will you pledge to undo the damage brought by FSCO's interference and signal to both sides today that you want to see a neutral third-party arbitration and an end to this impasse at last?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The member for Hamilton East has been in this House long enough to know that her suggestion is repulsive to the relationship between the government of Ontario and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. We do not give orders to an arm's-length organization.

So let's just set the record straight and describe what happened. There was a request by the credit union to delay their annual meeting until after the end of the dispute so as to protect the safety of workers and members of the credit union. That request was considered by FSCO and granted. What I could report to my friend is that the Ministry of Labour and their mediators continue to work with both sides, and we believe that, with the goodwill of all parties, we can reach a resolution to that dispute.

Ms. Horwath: Minister, whether you like it or not, you are responsible for FSCO, and FSCO's interference has made things worse.

I want to tell you a little bit about the drastic concessions that these women are fighting for in Hamilton—gains that they have realized over many years of struggle. FirstOntario doesn't want to provide women workers with full-time hours, it wants to reduce pension plan contributions and it wants a rollback on their sick benefits. While the FirstOntario Credit Union CEO, in the meantime, is boasting of record profits, he's forcing these hard-working women into poverty, with your blessing.

1520

Why wouldn't you want to see a neutral third party ensure that women working at FirstOntario Credit Union get decent wages and benefits so that they can support their families? Or would you rather they turned to food banks, charity and social assistance?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I think I understand as well as anyone in the House how difficult it is when members of a collective bargaining unit are on strike. We are trying, with the means that we have within the Ministry of Labour, to help the parties come together.

Frankly, I don't mind the member using question period to put a spotlight on this labour dispute, and we all

hope it gets resolved soon. What I regret and resent and would advocate against is my friend foolishly suggesting that we should interfere in the independence and the autonomy of a commission like the financial commission of Ontario to suit her narrow political purposes. She knows it would be wrong; everyone in this House knows that would be wrong.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): My question is to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Minister, recently you had the opportunity to hear from and speak directly with small businesses in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. I want to thank you for coming to Sault Ste. Marie and for listening to our community's concerns. As we all know, small businesses face many unique challenges and, as a government, we want to ensure that we are promoting their growth. Our government's support of the business community in my riding has played a significant role in helping to reduce our unemployment rate from 9.2% to 6.5% today.

Minister, can you elaborate on what your ministry is doing to support the growth of small businesses in northern Ontario?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): I would like to thank the member for asking this question. Very recently I had the chance to visit Sault Ste. Marie with the member and meet with the small business people there. I can tell you, he does an outstanding job of supporting the small businesses there.

In addition to having an outstanding member who is serving the community, let me just tell you what else we have been doing up north, especially in Sault Ste. Marie. We have seven enterprise centres in northern Ontario and one satellite centre. We also have specially designed programs just for the north, like the northern Ontario heritage fund, the northern Ontario young entrepreneur program and the Enterprises North job creation program. In addition to that, in our recent budget the Minister of Finance proposed a reduction of \$540 million in business education taxes, which will make the business environment equal throughout this province. So we are doing a lot to support—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Oraziotti: Minister, that's great news and further proof that our government is committed to helping small businesses in northern Ontario succeed and grow. In Sault Ste. Marie, the business education tax reduction will save local businesses \$4.7 million, or more than 30%.

I also want to reference that our flakeboard company in Sault Ste. Marie has received funding through the northern Ontario heritage fund, the prosperity fund of MNR, as well as the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade; truly a success story in our community.

In order to ensure that Ontario's small businesses remain competitive, it's important that we also provide

our youth with the opportunity to develop the essential business skills they need to lead our businesses on the world stage for years to come. A great example of this is a constituent from my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. This past November, Sarah Fortais, a student from Korah Collegiate, was the third-place winner in the northern Ontario Secondary School Business Plan Competition.

Our government has made it a priority to encourage youth to build their careers in northern Ontario. Minister, can you tell us what additional steps we are taking as a government to foster the entrepreneurial spirit among youth in my riding and throughout Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me thank the member again for asking this question. It's absolutely important for us to create a culture of entrepreneurship in this province, and there's no better way to do it than to start with our young people. We have some programs specially designed for young people. We have a summer company program which has been in existence for a while and is a very successful program. In addition to that, this year, for the first time, we held a conference just for young women to promote entrepreneurship culturally among our youth.

We have also introduced what we call the global edge program, which will give our young people international experience so that they can succeed in the world of business. All these programs are designed to make sure that the culture of entrepreneurship is alive and well in this province.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I've signed this, Mr. Speaker, and thank you.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have a petition here signed by thousands of people from across the province, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas FirstOntario Credit Union Ltd. has knowingly and intentionally violated section 212(2) of the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act, 1994 with the full and advance knowledge of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, that the Ministry of Finance immediately order a full regulatory investigation into the officers and management of FirstOntario Credit Union Ltd;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately implement the powers and authority of the ministry by launching a full investigation;

"To immediately implement section 322 of the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act, 1994;

"To order the immediate rescheduling of the annual meeting of FirstOntario Credit Union Ltd. under the bylaws of the corporation, and to monitor the meeting of members."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition wholeheartedly. I've signed it and send it down to the table by way of page Hayley.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to introduce the following petition titled "Physical Activity Petition." It's signed by a number of people, including Susan Clark from Niagara-on-the-Lake, Simon Reeves from Fort Erie, and Sherry Allen, also from Fort Erie. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

"Whereas Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

"Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools."

I'm pleased to have signed all these petitions to show my support for them.

CORMORANTS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition on behalf of the Speaker and the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the double-crested cormorants consume more fish than commercial fishing, sport fishing and poaching combined;

"Whereas double-crested cormorants are devastating the landscape of part of rural Ontario;

"Whereas double-crested cormorants are making beaches unusable;

"We, the undersigned, support the private member's bill of Ernie Parsons, MPP from Prince Edward-Hastings, to reclassify the double-crested cormorant into the same family as American crows, brown-headed cowbirds and the common grackle. This will allow for greatly increased opportunities for the harvesting of these double-crested cormorants."

I affix my name in support.

1530

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recent scientific studies have conclusively demonstrated that double-crested cormorants consume more fish than commercial fishing, sport fishing and poaching combined;

"Whereas double-crested cormorants are devastating nesting areas for other birds;

"Whereas double-crested cormorants are fouling water and making beaches unusable;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the private member's Bill 156 of Ernie Parsons, MPP Prince Edward-Hastings, to reclassify the double-crested cormorant into the same family as American crows, brown-headed cowbirds and the common grackle. This will allow for greatly increased opportunities for the culling of cormorants, in addition to other steps being taken to control cormorant populations and protect the environment."

I'm pleased to add my signature to this petition.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): I have a petition here regarding protecting animals in zoos.

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I fully agree with this petition and affix my signature in support and give it to Craig.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas every citizen of Ontario should have a safe, healthy and decent home; and

"Whereas thousands of individuals and families are denied this basic right when the province of Ontario downloaded affordable housing to the city of Toronto but refused to pay for the hundreds of millions of dollars in deferred capital repairs; and

"Whereas poor living conditions undermine the safety and security of communities, harming children, youth and families living in affordable homes; and

"Whereas failure to invest in good repair undermines the values of the province's affordable housing as the condition of the housing stock deteriorates; and

"Whereas poor living conditions have a damaging impact on the health of communities, costing Ontarians millions in health costs; and

"Whereas investment in housing pays off in better residences and in stronger, safer, healthier communities; and

"Whereas residents of Toronto Community Housing have waited five years for the province to pay its bills and bring affordable housing to a state of good repair;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Accept its responsibilities and invest \$300 million to ensure that all residents of Toronto Community Housing have a safe, decent and healthy home."

I'm in agreement and would affix my signature thereto.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to stand again and introduce the following petition. It reads as follows;

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of the province of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and their grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas we support Bill 8 as introduced by MPP Kim Craiton;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I'm pleased to sign this petition in total support of it.

LANDFILL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): "Whereas there is currently a proposal to more than triple the size of the Carp landfill in west Ottawa; and

"Whereas this site has been in operation for some 30 years and had been expected to close in 2010; and

"Whereas this landfill sits on porous fractured limestone, the worst possible substratum for a landfill; and

"Whereas the dump is in direct conflict with the exploding residential and commercial growth, soon to be 150,000 plus in Ottawa's west end; and

"Whereas the municipal councillors representing this area—Eli El-Chantiry, Shad Qadri and Peggy Feltmate—and the MPP, Norm Sterling, all oppose this expansion;

"We, the undersigned, support our local representatives and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the Minister of the Environment does not approve the expansion of the Carp landfill and instead seeks other waste management alternatives."

I have signed that.

LAKERIDGE HEALTH

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that Lakeridge Health should have full funding and not be facing an \$8-million shortfall;

"Whereas this would affect many programs, including the mental health program at Lakeridge Health;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fully fund the \$8-million shortfall for Lakeridge Health."

I'm in agreement and sign my name thereto.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to stand for the third time to read in the following petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program."

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of this.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to do with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare funding. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas studies indicate that overcrowded emergency rooms result in higher mortality rates; and

"Whereas growing demand and lack of availability of long-term-care beds place increased pressure on acute care beds; and

"Whereas the operating budget for MAHC must reflect the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services for the people of Muskoka-East Parry Sound and allocate more long-term-care beds for Muskoka-East Parry Sound."

I support this petition.

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to stand again:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the funding provided to long-term-care facilities for dietary needs does not keep pace with the expectations put forward from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We feel the funding provided from the provincial government to long-term-care facilities for raw food and dietary labour is inadequate. We ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase the funding provided to long-term-care facilities for raw food and dietary labour across the province."

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support.

CORMORANTS

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have another petition. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recent scientific studies have conclusively demonstrated that double-crested cormorants consume more fish than commercial fishing, sport fishing and poaching combined;

"Whereas double-crested cormorants are devastating nesting areas for other birds;

"Whereas double-crested cormorants are fouling water and making beaches unusable;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the private member's Bill 156 of Ernie Parsons, MPP Prince Edward-Hastings, to reclassify the double-crested cormorant into the same family as American crows, brown-headed cowbirds and the common grackle. This will allow for greatly increased opportunities for the culling of cormorants, in addition to other steps being taken to control cormorant populations and protect the environment."

1540

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice dealing with this afternoon's business in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is there consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that the House sit beyond 6 p.m. for the purpose of completing consideration of Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and Bill 171, An Act to improve health systems by amending or repealing various enactments and enacting certain Acts, following which, notwithstanding any other order of the House, the Speaker shall adjourn the House until 1:30 p.m. on April 3, 2007, and that this afternoon be considered one full sessional day of debate on Bill 187, An

Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

Mr. Sorbara moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 187, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Sorbara, the floor is yours.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm delighted to rise and begin the debate on second reading on the budget bill. Mr. Speaker, might I just advise you and other members of the House that I'm going to be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge? I'll do the lead-up and he's going to do all the salient points. That's the way it works in our ministry.

Could I just point out at the beginning that this budget bill amends a number of pieces of legislation? I just wanted to make note of them. It gives you a sense of the comprehensiveness of the budget we presented a week and a half ago in the House.

There are amendments to the Assessment Act, the Corporations Tax Act, the Income Tax Act, of course some amendments to the Retail Sales Tax Act, and amendments to the Tobacco Tax Act. Interim appropriations are achieved by way of this act. We are, in this bill, providing for the College of Early Childhood Educators. I'm very proud that that initiative was contained within the budget bill.

We are making changes to the Environmental Protection Act. We're providing for the establishment of a French-language services commissioner. We're dealing with the Justices of the Peace Act. We have created a new piece of legislation in the budget bill dealing with the status of Ontario artists, a specific act dealing specifically with the special role of artists in Ontario's society and culture and in our economy as well.

Finally, we are making amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. Through those amendments—something that I'm very proud of as a former Minister of Labour—is the fact that we're making adjustments to the benefits paid to some 155,000 injured workers.

I guess the various segments of the budget bill don't really tell the whole story. In the time allotted to me, I simply want to share with the members of this House and those who are following parliamentary proceedings just a few further thoughts on what was really contained in the budget that our government presented a week and a half ago.

I think the strongest part of the budget was that it truly reflected the values of the people of this province. The greatest challenge in government is to make sure that the initiatives we take are somehow in harmony with the vast majority of the people. Does that mean that every single person in Ontario says, "Yes, I see myself in the McGuinty budget?" No, I don't think so. That would be taking it a little far. But the values of the people of this province need to be reflected in everything we do and I think we captured that in this budget.

One of the most strongly felt values is simply that the people of this province want good government. They want government that is well managed. They want government to be prudent and disciplined and sure in the steps that it takes. That value was really reflected in the heart of this budget because, finally, with this budget—as I said on budget day—the province has returned to financial health. It's as simple as that. The province has finally, after a struggle of three and a half years, returned to financial health.

What does that mean? It means that we've left—however, I hope—the era of chronic deficits, structural deficits, being in the red. We started out, when we were sworn in, with a deficit of \$5.5 billion. That was the starting point. Finally, after three year and a half years, we were able to present a budget which shows that the province is back to financial health. Not only do we provide for a surplus but in the years ahead we provide for a sustainable surplus. I think that reflects one of the deepest-held values of the people of this province. They want us to manage well and prudently. They want us to make sure that every single penny that they send to this government by way of taxes is well spent. I feel that the fact that in a relatively short period of time we have emerged from structural deficits to surpluses is an indicator of the quality of the management of this government.

I also believe that a deeply held value of the people Ontario is the value that they put on the public services that government provides, notably in the areas of health care, education, and other public services as simple as getting a birth certificate on time. I think that's why my friend and partner for all these many years, Gerry Phillips, the Minister of Government Services, was so proud of the fact that we went beyond just saying, "We're going to try to do it on time." We provide a money-back guarantee now. Whether it's the first money-back guarantee of government in history I don't know, but he is very proud. He showed me the statistics the other day. I think there were a handful of occasions, in hundreds of thousands of applications for birth certificates, where the government wasn't able to deliver. But that's at the level of documentation.

What the people of Ontario really value is the quality of their education system and the quality of their health care system. I invite members of this Legislature to think back four years, about where we were both in the areas of health care and education. I'll tell you where we were. In education, the idea was, "We don't have much faith anymore in the public education system," so the party that was in government then, the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, was saying, "We're going to provide money to private schools so public schools don't have to meet that standard anymore."

1550

That was just four years ago. Four years later, I invite members of this House, I invite members of the public to have a conversation with a teacher, to have a conversation with parents. Our schools aren't perfect, but they are so much better as places to learn than they were four years ago, and we are very proud of that.

I heard the other day my friend the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Tory, talking about all these expenditures and no results. He must not have visited a school in the past two years if he says that, because they're much, much better.

The people of Ontario value high quality in health care. What was the debate four years ago? The debate four years ago was to the effect that maybe we can't have universal, publicly funded health care any longer. Talk to nurses today; my friend the minister knows about the nursing profession. Talk to doctors today; talk to patients; talk to practitioners. Visit a community health centre and just see the new sense of determination to be the very best we can be in the area of health care. Those are things that the people of Ontario value, and this budget and its expenditures reflected those values.

The people of this province also value government's responsibility to assist those amongst us who are living on the edge, those who are living in poverty—and there are too many living in poverty; those who are living with disabilities—and there are too many living with disabilities. The people of this province value government's responsibility to take action. For me, the proudest moment of this budget was that finally, after years and years, we are discussing, frankly and openly, poverty in the province of Ontario. This budget totally transforms the way in which we provide for children living in poverty, living in low-income families.

Mr. Tory says we're not doing it quickly enough. He says we're spending too much and yet we're not doing it quickly enough. You can't have it both ways, I say to my friend Mr. Tory. He wants us to spend much more money much more quickly, but he says we're spending too much. He wants to eliminate the health premium but he wants us not to go back into deficit.

I'm very proud that we have had the prudence to bring, over the course of five years, a new system to support children in poverty that will literally transform Ontario. We don't come to paradise, we don't come to the Garden of Eden, but we come to a much better place for our kids living on very meagre means.

I'm proud of the fact that we're putting money into housing, affordable housing. We're going to build new social housing. We're providing rent supplements. I'm so happy that we are able to put money to invest further in community living for people living with disabilities. I'm delighted that we were able to put additional funds to legal aid so that those living on the edge would have access to legal services. That system was in very bad shape. These are values that the people of Ontario hold and they're values that are reflected in the budget.

I also understand that the people of this province value diligence, particularly by their local representatives. In this case I want to say a word about my friend the member from Brant, Dave Levac, who has been fighting so strongly, with such power and with such an articulate ability for his community of Brantford, particularly in the area of brownfields. The people of Ontario value that kind of representation. I was thrilled to include in our budget an allocation of \$5 million for the city of Brantford to clean up brownfields. Does everyone understand what "clean up brownfields" means? It's simple. We've got old industrial areas that are polluted and have been denigrated by inappropriate use—maybe 50 years ago it wasn't inappropriate—and the soil is no good. You can't build on those sites and you can't use those sites and you can't get involved in urban redevelopment unless you clean them up.

The member for Brant, Dave Levac, has been making his pitch at this desk and all the desks around here and across the aisle that we need to start doing something about brownfields. We were able to do so with an allocation of \$5 million.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: He just pointed out to me that that will be topped off with another \$2 million to be used to build affordable housing on a site that will be cleaned up with the allocation on brownfields. The people of Ontario value what we're doing in Brantford and they value the work that a guy like Dave Levac does on behalf of his community.

There are so many other things to talk about in this budget. I know that my parliamentary assistant worked side by side with all of us. It's like one big family over there. It really is. Sometimes the fights are just like big families, but we worked so closely together and he did such a great job in bringing a perspective to budget-making.

We began four months ago on this budget. The crafting of each initiative was thoroughly vetted throughout this side of the House and, now and again, with members of the opposition as well. I think that the product speaks for itself. It's a budget that says that we're healthy again in Ontario. It's a budget that says that we need to continue to invest in our schools, in our health care system and our post-secondary education system. It's a budget that says that government has to be a leader when it comes to creating new economic capacity. We do that in a variety of ways, including lower business education taxes—half a billion dollars when you add it up all

around Ontario. It's a budget that says that government has a role to play—a very big role to play; perhaps a pre-eminent role to play—in helping vulnerable populations. All together, it is a budget that speaks to the values of the people of this great province.

Over the course of the next several months, a number of these initiatives will be initiated. The first part of the Ontario child benefit will be paid out. The down payment, as we called it, will be paid out in July. A little later on we begin with increased benefits for injured workers. In my own home communities in the greater Toronto area, we're beginning to eliminate the dreaded pooling tax, which was such an unfortunate legacy of the previous government's restructuring of the property tax system.

I think we're well on our way with this budget. I can simply tell you that everyone in my own ministry worked very hard to make sure that it responded to the needs of the people of Ontario. I'm very pleased by the way in which it responded to the values of the people of Ontario.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I'm particularly pleased and honoured to join the debate and follow the Minister of Finance and his comments about the budget and what it means to the people of Ontario and the optimism that he finds in this budget and the work we've been doing as a government over the past three and a half years to bring stability to the finances of the province as well as to invest in those core value systems that we set out three and a half years ago, whether it was education or health care, infrastructure in this province, public service, and the economy, and, at the same time, using the prudent fiscal management necessary to set us on the road to good health.

I'm pleased to be part of the Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, 2007. The minister outlined the fourth part of our government's overall plan to invest in people and to expand opportunities for all Ontarians, and that means not only those who find themselves in a position to do well, not only those who have the opportunity to have the education that provides them with unique opportunities, but opportunities for every single Ontarian.

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The minister spoke about the way this particular part of the plan, this fourth year of the plan, makes investments in children and in families while projecting a budget surplus for the second consecutive year. These new measures are to build on our ongoing investments in health care, education and infrastructure in the province of Ontario. Indeed, the minister outlined for each of us the way the budget measures in this bill build on the achievements that have gone before over these previous three years and that position us here in the province of Ontario for a very bright future.

In speaking to the bill today, I'd like to highlight a few of the initiatives in the bill and take some time as well to talk a bit about the interim appropriations measures that are included in the bill. It's critical to the delivery of the plan that's been laid out in the budget to have this bill

and the interim appropriations dealt with by this Legislature.

Expanding opportunity for all Ontarians helps build a strong and prosperous Ontario, one in which every individual can participate to their fullest. Our government recognizes that giving everyone a fair chance to succeed is the right thing to do—the right thing for society and the right thing for the economy of this province. If each and every Ontarian is to be able to participate in the province's prosperity, the appropriate and necessary support and opportunities must be made available to each and every one of them.

This, our fourth budget, is the next step in our plan to strengthen Ontario by strengthening its people. That's why we're focusing in this particular budget on making opportunity more accessible and success more achievable.

It's why we're moving yet again on raising the minimum wage. Having completed the first part of our plan to achieve \$8 in this mandate, we're now moving through this particular budget bill to a minimum wage of \$10.25 over the next three years.

We're investing in this budget in affordable housing, providing the resources necessary to the housing providers through municipalities and others to put those units in the ground so families have places to live in an affordable fashion.

We're enhancing the Ontario property and sales tax credits for seniors. This is the fourth time in four years that we've done this. This provides a wonderful opportunity for seniors who may be of more modest means in their pensionable years and on fixed incomes to offset some of their costs. We hear a lot from seniors about their costs for education taxes, and the property tax credit coming from the province is a wonderful offset to the education taxes that are necessary in their communities.

The minister spoke to the opportunity for pension income splitting, following up on the federal budget initiatives, to allow that pension income splitting to occur as well on the provincial side of the tax ledger.

We're working in this budget as well to enhance workplace safety and insurance benefits for over 155,000 injured workers. In January of next year, the rates for WSIB claimants benefits will rise by 2.5%; on July 1 of next year, by a further 2.5%; and on July 1 of the following year, by a further 2.5%. So over that two-and-a-half-year span, those rates will increase by some 7.5% for injured workers, those who aren't able to be in the workplace, to help them support themselves and their families.

There's increased funding in this budget for Legal Aid Ontario. We know there are those in our community who need access to legal services who can't afford them, and we need to have the resources available so they can get the legal assistance they need to clear up matters in their life in as short a time frame as possible. We know, particularly when we have parents who need to have support payments that have to be dealt with through the legal system, as an example, that it's important for them to have access to the legal aid that might be available.

This budget is part of the reason why we're moving to take children off the welfare rolls. It's why the Ontario child benefit will address not only children of families who find themselves in need of that type of social support, but it will also address the opportunities for families that are out there working at low-income levels. All children must be given the best possible start in life if they're to seize the opportunities for success that each of us would like to have our children have the opportunity to seize.

Families must be given the support required to secure their most basic needs and be equipped to participate in Ontario's economic prosperity. To achieve these goals, we're proposing measures in the bill to implement the Ontario child benefit that was announced in this budget. The minister has already spoken to the number of children—some 1.3 million children, over 600,000 families—who will benefit as the plan comes into its full implementation.

Minister Sorbara spoke about this particular initiative, so I'm not going to speak much more of it, only to say that I hope members here in this Legislature will be supporting Bill 187 because there are so many children in this province and so many families across the province that would benefit from this program and are deserving of our support. Children who are growing up in low-income families in Ontario do deserve a better start in life and the provisions of Bill 187 will help to make that so.

This bill will also benefit children by supporting a higher-quality early learning and child care system. I'm referring to the proposed establishment of a college of early childhood educators. The college would improve and maintain consistent standards of quality in the child care system in the province of Ontario by establishing, among other things, professional standards of practice, qualifications and ongoing professional development for early childhood educators. It's not unlike what already exists for those in the elementary and secondary systems of public education here in this province. It's being extended to those who are dealing with our children at the youngest age, more and more of whom we find in the system at an earlier age gaining the education they so desperately need as they enter into the formal system. This is an important step toward a better child care system here in Ontario.

I want to speak briefly about some matters in the budget. We talk about creating new economic strength and expanding opportunities as the foundation of a successful, caring, compassionate society. Other elements of the bill include the amendments being proposed to the credit unions/caisses populaires legislation. It's a significant piece of legislation. That part of the economic system, that part of the lending and borrowing and saving system, has been wanting for some time, and we're pleased to see that included within Bill 187. It's going to go a long way to help modernize and regulate this particular industry and bring them current in what they're doing, put them in a more competitive position within the banking system overall. It's a commitment we made to

this industry in 2003 and we're happy to be able to fulfill that commitment to the credit unions and the caisses populaires through this legislation.

A key element of the government's strategy for strengthening the Ontario economy is maintaining a competitive tax and business environment to encourage additional investment growth. The House's support for Bill 187 can be an important step in supporting a strong and dynamic economy in Ontario. In the budget, we announced our intention to accelerate the elimination of the capital tax, which is currently scheduled to be eliminated by January 1, 2012. This legislation would legislate this acceleration so that by July 1, 2010, the tax would be fully eliminated for all businesses in Ontario regardless of size. This is one of the key elements we heard from the business community over the last number of years, that it's a regressive tax, an unfair tax and one that needed to be eliminated. So I'm very pleased to see the minister, within the context of developing the budget and the bill, has found the means to accelerate that and also legislate it so there's surety for the business community as they do their capital planning strategies that this particular tax will be eliminated by July 2010.

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The bill also proposes amendments to the Corporations Tax Act to extend certain key tax credits that support Ontario's competitiveness. One of these is the apprenticeship training tax credit introduced in 2004. This represents a 25% to 30% refundable tax credit on salaries and wages paid to eligible apprentices and encourages businesses to hire and train apprentices in many areas and designated skilled trades that are and will be needed for the economy of Ontario in the years ahead. We're proposing to extend this credit to eligible apprentices who start employment before January 1, 2012.

And to help support the availability of skilled workers in key sectors of the economy, we're adding six more trades, bringing the total number of qualifying trades under this particular tax credit to 123. So a broad range of skill sets and trades in the province of Ontario will now have access to these particular tax credits as new apprentices are being trained in their particular field of endeavour.

Bill 187 would also extend the 18% rate for the Ontario production services tax credit until March 31, 2008. This particular tax credit is an important part of our support for Ontario's film and television industry, and for maintaining the competitiveness of our entertainment and creative cluster.

As you're aware, last fall we introduced legislation to streamline the administration of the province's corporate tax system and harmonize it with our federal counterparts, the federal corporate income tax base. There are further amendments necessary within Bill 187 that will help keep this harmonization process moving along with the federal government to bring it to conclusion.

These are a few samples of the measures in this particular bill, Bill 187, that will help to foster a strong and dynamic economy and keep Ontario competitive in the global marketplace.

I said I would speak briefly to interim appropriations. As you know, we're entering a new era in the province of Ontario, one of fixed election dates, taking the guesswork out of when an election will be held and allowing the public to understand and prepare themselves for their choices with respect to the leaders in their communities. With interim appropriations, not only can we move forward the initiative that Minister Sorbara has already spoken about, but we'd also have the legal spending authority from the start of the fiscal year, April 1, through to the general election. This system is consistent with other jurisdictions and allows the Legislature to approve government spending, a more transparent method than was used in previous election years. That's why we're introducing a budget bill that includes the Interim Appropriations Act, 2007 to ensure that the province of Ontario can continue to make scheduled and unscheduled payments, including payments to nursing homes, hospitals, doctors and municipalities right up to this fall's election.

Without a general election, our supply process generally uses motions for interim supply. In that scenario, the assembly grants the government the authority to spend out of the consolidated revenue fund that keeps us functioning pending the completion of the estimates process and the passage of the relevant Supply Act. However, because of the rules of sessionality, a motion for interim supply would not work in our current state of affairs. Courts have ruled that once dissolution has occurred, an interim supply motion would not hold. So, in the interest of ensuring that the government has proper spending authority, we've introduced interim appropriations legislation as part of this spring bill.

It's the responsible thing to do. It ensures that during the period surrounding the general election in Ontario, the province retains legal spending authority until a new government is formed. Enacting the Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, 2007, is the first step in modernizing the process that authorizes the government for expenditures to occur. With the support of this Legislature on Bill 187, we'd have the legal spending authority, from the start of the fiscal year through the general election, so we can move forward with the necessary services we provide for over 13 million people in Ontario.

I am particularly proud of what we've accomplished so far in our three and a half years, and particularly so in the budget the minister presented in this House just a week or so ago.

I am excited about the plans we have for our future, because ultimately they will strengthen the people in this great province we have. We will build upon the prosperity of the people of the province of Ontario; we will build upon the health of the people of Ontario; we will build on their education and the skills necessary to continue our prosperity.

We've made tremendous progress over the past three and a half years, but there's still much to be done. I would ask the members of the Legislature for their

support for Bill 187 so that we can continue to move forward on our plans, invest in Ontarians and expand opportunity for each and every one of us. I'm pleased to be able to stand today and speak to Bill 187 and ask this Legislature for the support of the bill when it comes to a vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I appreciate the opportunity to speak about Bill 187. I know that the forest industry has been devastated in northern Ontario with the changes that have taken place there, the downsizing; it doesn't matter if it's Sault Ste. Marie, Chapleau or any of the places that are very dependent on the forest industry. Yet we have a company that's come forward—and quite frankly it does deal directly with Bill 187—that's willing to invest \$1 billion in northern Ontario. My understanding is that they are going to bring over 400 new jobs to northern Ontario.

But the concern there is that they were never consulted on what's taking place with the new diamond royalty tax that's being implemented here. It's upwards of 13%, where the standard mining industry in Ontario is taxed at 10%. There's no fixed aspect of it; it's supposed to be related to the value of production in a year, which causes a lot of concern. If you look at Attawapiskat, for example, it's a devastated community each spring and it has problems with flooding. They talked about relocating Attawapiskat to other places. Quite frankly, that's where this diamond mine, the Victor mine, is being located.

It does a number of other things, and I certainly hope the parliamentary assistant or the minister addresses the diamond tax issue, because it's going to cause a lot of individuals concern over whether they even intend to do any further diamond exploration in the province of Ontario. I know there are a number of other sites that are currently being reviewed for potential diamond development. However, if this diamond tax moves forward, that \$1 billion, which will generate \$7 billion net into the northern economies, will be substantially affected.

I certainly hope the minister intends to meet with the diamond industry, as my understanding is that there was no consultation when this process took place. It was just brought forward as, "That's the way we're going to do it." It's going to have a substantial impact on the north. I hope the current government takes a look at this and tries to address concerns about the royalty tax.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I listened to the minister and to his parliamentary assistant in their statements—literally effuse about the bill, effuse about the budget—talk about how wonderful this budget really is. I would gladly be persuaded, but not against my better judgment, to quote Socrates.

When one looks at this bill, in the end, all there is are a few small, incremental steps being taken. When the parliamentary assistant stood, the member from Whitby–Ajax–Uxbridge, he said that there is much more to be done." That's the way he ended, and he's so right. There was so much more for this government to have done within their four years of this mandate than they have

actually done. Had they started off on the budget which was presented a few weeks ago as their first budget and built upon it, one might have said that they had made real progress. But the reality is that they wasted the first three and a half years, and now they come along and pretend that they're actually doing something.

I've looked at the time frames, and I invite everyone to look at the time frames of this budget. How much is being done in 2007? How much money is being spent before this House rises or before the election on October 10, 2007? Precious little. What is being done is nothing more than promising what is going to happen. In 2009, 2010, 2011 or 2017, some of these budget measures might actually take place. In fact, this is not a budget of which one should be proud. This is a budget that has come far too late and a budget that really has accomplished very little within the four years of this government's mandate. They should not be up here being proud; they should be standing up here trying to explain why they have failed so miserably.

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Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I'm very proud of this budget and proud to vote for it, proud because it brings \$60 million to the city of Ottawa.

I'm not the only one who's praising Minister Sorbara. I love reading the community newspapers in my community. One of them, Barrhaven This Week, has a couple of quotes from a number of city councillors. Gord Hunter, from part of my riding, says: "He added that the city's long shopping list has almost been filled through last week's provincial budget."

Gloucester-South Nepean councillor Steve Desroches "called the funding a step in the right direction and added he is hopeful the money will be used to upgrade some buildings in communities across the city."

Councillor Jan Harder said, "I think it shows this council is working closely with the province. They have listened. That's a lot of money. It's a good start in rectifying the funding gap."

This is in addition to the \$111.8 million that the McGuinty government has brought to the people of Ottawa through gas tax, through funding of police officers and through a wide variety of other initiatives. I'm particularly proud that a number of community centre projects, which is part of my portfolio—the Ministry of Health Promotion—are going to be funded. I was at the Ottawa South Community Centre on Sunnyside Avenue in my old neighbourhood, presenting their councillor, Clive Doucet, and the president of their community association, Michael Jenkin, with a \$200,000 contribution for that project.

I also read in the Manotick Messenger that the member from Nepean-Carleton—all sorts of negativity about this budget. So I understand that she and her party are going to vote against the budget. That means they're going to vote against \$60 million coming into Phil McNeely's community; coming into Jean-Marc Lalonde's community; Richard Patten's; Madeleine Meilleur's; our

Premier, Dalton McGuinty's; and mine in Ottawa West-Nepean.

This is a good-news budget for the people of Ottawa. It reinvests in priorities like transit, housing and community recreation infrastructure, including \$2 million for the World Junior Hockey Championship, which is a good investment for tourism development.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I was disappointed in this budget, as were many people across the province of Ontario. I read from the Ottawa Citizen about the budget the next day: "This week's Ontario budget should" be "called the 'vote now, pay later' budget, which, come to think of it, would have been a good name for the Ontario Liberals' last election platform." Vote now, pay later. That's because many of the things promised in this budget won't even be complete until 2014, seven years away. What is the chance that this government will be in power at that time? Not very great.

I've also heard the minister from Ottawa talk about the wonderful \$60 million given to the city of Ottawa. That's less than the Harris government gave to Ottawa in centennial year. It was over \$70 million given to the city of Ottawa in centennial year. Here they are so flush with money that they're trying to get it out the door and all they can come up with is \$60 million for the city of Ottawa. What a pittance. No wonder the member for Ottawa Centre talks about the province being ruled from Toronto and by Toronto. Toronto gets the big bucks; Ottawa gets little, if anything.

As well, it talks here about the Liberal plan to raise the minimum wage to \$10.25 by 2010. A study accompanying the budget says that it will cost between 90,000 and 180,000 jobs—90,000 to 180,000 jobs down the drain, according to the study attached to the budget. If they're going to raise the minimum wage or they're going to have a plan to do it, it should be supported by studies—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

The member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, you have up to two minutes.

Mr. Arthurs: I certainly wanted to thank the members from Oshawa and Beaches-East York, as well as the Minister of Health Promotion and the member from Lanark-Carleton, for their comments in respect to both the minister's initial speech and my follow-up comments.

The question I have to ask is, in the absence of a plan, in the absence of a premise to go forward, in the absence of dealing with children through the Ontario child benefit, in the absence of a strategy over two or three years to deal with WSIB, without a strategy on a go-forward basis for developmental services, without a strategy to deal with the minimum wage in a progressive fashion, how do we get there? We can't get there today in one fell swoop on all of these fronts. There has to be a planned, go-forward strategy.

I would ask members opposite, particularly the member from Lanark-Carleton: Which of these measures would you want to undo? Would you want to undo the Ontario child benefit for those are in need in our

community—our youngest, most vulnerable children? Would you want to undo, in a subsequent government, WSIB enhancements for those injured workers? Would you want to undo the investment in developmental services for that very needy sector? Would you want to undo the capacity to see those who are working at a very modest level have an increase in their wages over the next three years to \$10.25?

I can appreciate that members want us to do it all today. That's simply not possible. One needs a structured plan to make investments now and know when we're going to achieve those end results. I would challenge members of this Legislature to tell us which of those initiatives that they see in a subsequent budget year that they would want to dismantle. Would it be the Ontario child benefit, WSIB payments, developmental services support or the minimum wage? I think they would be hard-pressed to find any of those on which they would want to turn the clock back, based on this budget plan and this budget bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise in the debate on Bill 187, the Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, 2007—hopefully the very last budget bill of the Dalton McGuinty government. I'll even put a few things into perspective at the beginning on this bill and then I'm going to get into some of the details about many of the offensive measures that my colleagues from Lanark-Carleton and Oshawa—Mr. Ouellette already covered some of those items. I'll relate my own views on those. But let's put the financial picture of the province into perspective before we get into some of the details of the bill itself.

Now we are—what?—I guess just a week plus from the day the budget was actually read in the Legislative Assembly. It reminds me very much, I say to my friend from Brantford and to the minister for recreation, of the 1994 World Series. Do you remember the 1994 World Series?

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: I should ask the Minister of Tourism, I guess. The 1994 World Series we won't remember very well because in fact there was no 1994 World Series. It's the one people won't talk about. That was the year the World Series was cancelled.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Trick question?

Mr. Hudak: It's not meant to be a trick question *per se* but just instructive, in that nobody's talking about this budget.

Mr. Levac: I got it.

Mr. Hudak: My friend from Brantford understands the analogy. This has gone over like the proverbial lead balloon across Ontario. It was, at best, a one-day wonder. If the average working person and the average senior in the province of Ontario, working hard to try to make ends meet in the province, knew anything about this budget or had any thoughts a week and a half later, they'd say that there was nothing in it for them. They are paying higher taxes, higher utility fees, new user fees thanks to Dalton

McGuinty's privatization of elements of the OHIP system like chiropractic care and physiotherapy, higher licensing fees for the driver's licence, etc. Lord knows how many of the various and sundry charges that the government has on the books have increased. I think they even increased the price of beer in the province—the Dalton McGuinty government has—as well as spirits.

I think that if you asked the average person watching today what they thought about the budget, they would have very little recollection about the promises in the budget and they would say that very little, if anything, is of importance to them. I think they're tired of working hard, paying more taxes, playing by the rules and falling further and further behind in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Let's put the total spending of the Dalton McGuinty government into perspective. It took from Confederation—our first Premier, John Sandfield Macdonald—until 2003 and the then Premier, Ernie Eves, to get spending to \$68 billion annually—from Confederation to 2003 to get spending to \$68 billion annually. Now, in one term alone, Dalton McGuinty has blown the roof off of provincial spending, skyrocketing it to over \$91 billion. From \$68 billion to \$91 billion in one term alone is simply breathtaking.

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Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): That's more than we did.

Mr. Hudak: They make Bob Rae look like a piker, and that's back when he was NDP, at least in card.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation actually put out an interesting report on this, I say to my friend from Timmins, Monsieur Bisson, that showed that Dalton McGuinty's increase in his first two budgets was greater than Bob Rae's or even the former poster child for runaway spending, David Peterson's. Dalton McGuinty in fact has left the Peterson and Bob Rae governments in the dust. I know my friend from Timmins-James Bay knows that to be the case as well. It's rather eye-opening to think that you've actually outspent Bob Rae and David Peterson when it comes to budget increases. It's probably shocking and eye-opening to most people watching today.

That is basically about a 33% increase in government spending, obviously fuelled by higher taxes and higher fees. You know how that all works. If you ask the people of Ontario if they've seen anything near a 33% increase in the quality of services and in their own ability to afford goods and services, it would be a resounding no.

Let me put that \$22 billion in increased spending in another perspective. That's \$4,500 per household in increased spending or an additional \$750,000 in additional spending per hour that Dalton McGuinty has been office. This is the Steve Austin, the Six Million Dollar Man of spending. You can't keep up with it: \$750,000 in additional spending per hour since Dalton McGuinty came into office. For those born after 1975, I'll explain that one later on.

Program spending has increased by an astounding 8.8%, 8.9%, 7% and 6.8%, respectively, in the first four

years. So between 7% and 8%—just doing that in my head—an almost 8% increase in annual spending growth when the average working family has seen their income increase at half of that rate, at the very best.

On top of that, the McGuinty Liberals have added over \$10 billion to the net provincial debt, and it could grow further if they follow their projections in the time ahead.

Mr. Sterling: that's \$10 billion more you've added to the debt.

Mr. Hudak: It's \$10 billion more, Lanark-Carleton says correctly, added to the debt.

What is also important is that we all remember—I think my colleagues probably haven't burned their last copy; they probably have it somewhere in a safe or buried in the bottom drawer of their desk—the Dalton McGuinty platform. Surely there must be a copy left somewhere in the province of Ontario for comparison sake. Maybe they were all burned. Maybe they're buried under those houses on the Oak Ridges moraine they promised to stop. I'm not sure where the last of the campaign platforms go. Fortunately, we kept a photocopy. It's almost like seeing one of the Dead Sea scrolls, a photocopy of one of the original platforms.

In Plan for Change, the McGuinty Liberals said they would raise spending to \$81.1 billion by fiscal year 2006-07 and revenue would be \$83.4 billion, leaving a \$2.3-billion surplus. We remember this. This was the so-called fiscal plan of the McGuinty government that they claimed people had signed off on. They would keep all of their promises: \$81.1 billion per year fuelled by revenue of \$83.4 billion per year. In fact, I think it would be an understatement to say that Dalton McGuinty has kept very few of his promises. He has broken promises at a rate that would make Pinocchio blush.

Let's be clear about this: \$83.4 billion was the amount of revenue that Dalton McGuinty said, when he looked into the eyes of voters across the province of Ontario in those famous TV commercials—infamous TV commercials—he needed to meet all of his campaign promises. Instead, he has received, for 2006-07, \$89.1 billion in revenue. I think that's from the Q3 fiscal update. So he has exceeded, by almost \$6 billion, what he said he needed to keep his promises and still has 50-plus broken promises, many of which aren't even fulfilled in this, his last budget, showing that he has had a lot of revenue coming in but despite that cannot set priorities and therefore has not kept his promises.

On the expenditure side, as I indicated, in the Liberal election platform Dalton McGuinty said he needed \$81.1 billion to finance his expenditures. The actual expenditure has been \$88.8 billion over the last fiscal and, as I said, it goes over \$91 billion in 2007-08, so some \$7.7 billion more in expenditures by the McGuinty government—\$7.7 billion more in expenditures—than he said he needed to keep his campaign promises, and they remain unfulfilled. It's a cumulative increase of some \$21.7 billion.

We have talked—I'll get to this momentarily—about the impact of Dalton McGuinty's failed fiscal policies on

the economy in the province of Ontario, which has spurred significant flight of well-paying manufacturing jobs from this province, some 120,000 manufacturing jobs in the last two years alone. If you look at the real GDP growth rates in the province of Ontario and compare what has happened between the experience of the previous government, which was reducing red tape and reducing taxes and spurring the economy—the economy wasn't strong when we began in office in 1996; the growth rate was only 1.1%. Our agenda for economic growth kicked into overdrive, and we saw in 1997 an economic growth rate of 4.5%; in 1998, 4.8%; in 1999, 7.5%, in 2000, 5.9%. Unfortunately, we had 2001, with the attacks on the United States, which slowed down our economy and impacted; it rebounded in 2002 at 3%. At any rate, you can see the types of growth rates that transpired under the previous Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris. As part of that, we had a net creation of one-million-plus new jobs in the province of Ontario, which led not only Canada but North America in job creation.

Sadly, Dalton McGuinty's Ontario is another take altogether. The 2004 economic growth, when he came into office, was decent at 3.1%. Once Dalton McGuinty's taxes—the highest taxes now in business in North America, along with Saskatchewan—kicked in, and higher hydro rates and increased red tape, we saw growth rates slow down to 2.8%, a dismal 1.3% in the 2006 forecast, and forecast once again in 2007 to be an embarrassing 1.6%, when you compare it to the growth rates of the other provinces.

I was absolutely shocked, and I know my colleagues across the floor were shocked as well, to hear that Ontario last year was dead last in economic growth in all of Canada. That's certainly not the Ontario, Mr. Speaker, that you grew up in and that I grew up in, that immigrants who have come to this province to find work anticipated. But now, sadly, Dalton McGuinty's Ontario is last in the pack in economic growth and is forecast to be last in the pack again in 2007.

Let me talk a bit about the spending habits of the government as well, because they like to spin this myth that all of the revenue they brought in is needed for planned government expenditures. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Year after year, the McGuinty government has taken in more revenue than they said they needed. I spoke earlier about their economic plan as part of their platform. They have some \$7.7 billion more in expenditure than they said they had needed. By the way, the so-called health tax—which we all know doesn't go to health care; it goes to the consolidated revenue fund, the same place that gasoline taxes go, or slot money from the casinos, for example, the sales tax. It all goes into that giant pot of money at the Frost Building, so to speak. So there was some \$7.7 billion more in revenue than they said they needed when they made their promises. This so-called health tax is really nothing more than an income tax on the backs of the middle class and seniors, which now is about \$2.6

billion, so almost three times as much additional spending has occurred as this so-called health tax. The health tax is really effectively doing nothing but fuelling the runaway spending of the McGuinty government outside of priority health care services.

1640

My friend from Brantford I know will be very interested in some of the numbers here. Last year the McGuinty government had a significant, what we call a slush fund. This means more revenue came in at the end of the year than they said that they needed for the platform or that they were forecasting in their third quarter finances only a couple of months before.

Let me just go over for those—I know that they visited mcguintywatch.ca, but I'll go over some of the numbers on mcguintywatch.ca for the sake of the record. Visitors to mcguintywatch.ca will remember that last year we projected Dalton McGuinty's end-of-year slush fund would be approximately \$3 billion. That would be a large number indeed. We saw a substantial end-of-year slush fund due to \$2.1 billion in higher-than-expected revenues, \$360 million in lower debt interest costs, \$1.2 billion in contingency funds, and a \$1-billion reserve. In other words, the actual slush fund, if you totalled those up, was a shocking \$4.6 billion more in end-of-year revenue than they claimed they were receiving, far outpacing the \$3 billion that we projected.

That does far exceed the so-called health tax, which was \$2.6 billion, not quite twice as much but definitely a much larger margin than has come in through the health tax. Most of that spending, by the way, that \$4.6-billion cushion, went into further government spending as opposed to reducing the tax burden or paying down the debt. Really, a paltry \$310-million surplus is not something to boast about when you had a \$4.6-billion end-of-year slush fund in the finances and the year before was quite similar.

I'll remind members of what happened this time last year. That was when Dwight Duncan, the member for the Windsor area was finance minister. As opposed to reducing the tax burden on working families and seniors, they went on a mad money spending spree extraordinaire. The Auditor General actually has circled this as part of his report and indicated that Dalton McGuinty last year had several last-minute treasury board orders in order to spend millions of dollars per minute. We all know why he did that. If he didn't, the money would be used to balance the books and pay down the debt, but instead the McGuinty government made a choice to spend that money at an extraordinary rate.

On March 9, 2006, the McGuinty cabinet met to spend \$432 million in a single cabinet meeting, or \$2.4 million per minute. Not to be outdone, they came back March 23, all psyched up, ready to spend, pencils sharpened, cheques ready to go. On March 23, 2006, the McGuinty cabinet met to spend \$640 million, I'd remind you, eight days before the end of the fiscal year. What a flurry of spending to get it out the door before it could be used to balance the books or pay down the deficit—\$640 million,

or, to top the week before, \$3.5 million per minute. My goodness, the finance minister's arm must have been falling off with that rate of spending.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: I don't know how much of that money went to Niagara West—Glanbrook. In fact, the problem is, we don't know where all that money went.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Erie—Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: Well, I'm not so sure. That's a lot of money—\$3.5 million per minute.

On March 30, 2006, 24 hours before the clock went out, they still had a big lump sum, a big slush fund there sitting over at the Frost Building. Twenty-four hours, one day before, they went on another mad dash, spending some \$205 million, or \$1.4 million per minute—24 hours before the gate came down. That is a total of about \$1.6 billion in end-of-year spending.

Let me read into the record what the auditor said about this. This is a quote from the Auditor General's 2006 annual report, page 344: "Just prior to or on March 31, 2006, the government entered into a number of transfer-payment arrangements and expensed the amounts involved, thereby reducing the surplus for the year by almost \$1.6 billion more than otherwise would have been the case ... in many cases, normal accountability and control provisions were reduced or eliminated to ensure the transfers would qualify for immediate expensing prior to ... fiscal year-end."

Further, "The transfer agreements did not set out specific conditions for the use of the funds. None of the transfers resulted in any investments in capital assets or infrastructure or in delivery of services to the public during the 2005-06 fiscal year...."

Let me reiterate that point: "In many cases, normal accountability and control provisions were reduced or eliminated to ensure the transfers would qualify for immediate expensing," meaning, in the vernacular, "no strings attached." The cheques were sent out—shovelled out the door—as fast as it could happen, with no strings in how those provincial dollars were accounted for. We're not really sure even how they were used by the various groups that received those funds.

Let me read a few third-party comments on the 2007 budget spending, which is also similar to the previous two years: a lot of last-minute cheque-signing as the calendar turns to March 31. The Royal Bank Economics Research from March 22, 2007, says, "Going forward, the province has, in our opinion, lowballed forecasts for both revenues and spending. We're suspicious on both counts as revenue growth may well surprise on the high side again this year, which may well leave the McGuinty government with the freedom to spend off-budget amounts in the lead-up to an election."

No wonder they're suspicious. That's the exact same trick that the finance minister and Premier McGuinty have used each of the last three years. They lowball revenues, they overestimate expenses, and when they

have a lot of room at the end of the year, they just start dishing it out as fast as they can. I think we're particularly vulnerable to this given that there's an election set for October 10, 2007.

Dr. Sherry Cooper, chief economist, Bank of Montreal capital markets, had this to say: "The strength in revenues would suggest scope for an even larger improvement on the surplus. The offset was that program spending rose 6.8% or by \$5.1 billion. Thus the fiscal year 2007-08 surge in revenues was absorbed by higher program spending. The FY2006-07 surplus was only maintained by debt servicing costs falling \$0.2 billion." In other words, as Dr. Cooper points out, the government had unplanned spending increases of some \$5.1 billion—mind you, approximately twice the value of the so-called health tax.

One more quote and then I'll move on to another section of the binder in response to Bill 187. Kevin Gaudet, Ontario director, Canadian Taxpayers Federation, said, "The more money Ontario taxpayers have sent, the more the government has spent. Premier McGuinty never met a program he didn't like or a tax he didn't hike." Well said, Kevin Gaudet, Ontario director, Canadian Taxpayers Federation. One more time to my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk, who I know appreciates and agrees with the sentiment of Mr. Gaudet: "The more money Ontario taxpayers have sent, the more the government has spent. Premier McGuinty never met a program he didn't like or a tax he didn't hike." He's absolutely right.

Let me summarize before I move on to some of the jobs and economy impacts of the high tax and runaway spending and high-energy fiscal policy of the McGuinty government. We had projected that the end-of-year slush fund for 2006-07 was going to be \$3 billion. We said that would be about \$400 million in higher revenues and \$400 million in lower debt costs. There was a \$1.2-billion contingency or slush fund already on the books and a \$1-billion reserve. So that's \$3 billion, a rough estimate of the slush fund. As I said earlier, it turned out to be—what's the word for it? Shocking? Enormous?

Mr. Bisson: Appalling.

Mr. Hudak: Appalling—in terms of the inaccuracy. Gargantuan. How often do you get to use the word "gargantuan" in a sentence? "A gargantuan slush fund of some \$4.6 billion—\$2.1 billion in higher revenues than they said they had in the third quarter; \$360 million in lower debt servicing; \$1.2 billion in contingency; and a \$1-billion reserve—\$2.4 billion of which was used for a mad money spending spree. Last year mcguintywatch.ca projected that the slush fund would be between \$2.5 and \$3.1 billion. The 2006 end-of-year slush fund was \$3.7 billion. I guess we have to, based on the performance of the McGuinty government, ratchet up the amount of money that is socked away in end-of-year slush funds.

1650

Let me make that case one last time as I get closer to the halfway point of my speech—

Mr. Bisson: Don't tell me you're almost halfway done already.

Mr. Hudak: Because of these time limits—I mean, if there is unanimous consent, I could go on.

Mr. Bisson: You can ask; I'll give it to you.

Mr. Hudak: My friend from Timmins—James Bay says that he may consider extending my time. We'll ask in about half an hour and see if you're still of the same view.

Let me make this clear: The only reason Dalton McGuinty had to break his promise on taxes is that he also broke his promise on spending restraint. We all remember that mother of all broken promises—

M. Bisson: Je me souviens.

Mr. Hudak: "Je me souviens," my friend for Timmins—James Bay says accurately—the \$2.6 billion on the backs of middle-class families and seniors brought in by Dalton McGuinty, even though he stared directly into the camera and said that he wouldn't raise your taxes. The only reason, when we look at the numbers now—three years later, four years later—that Dalton McGuinty broke his promise on taxes was that he also broke his promise on spending restraint.

We all remember that Dalton McGuinty swore up and down that he wouldn't increase taxes. We all remember that, a few months later, once safely elected and he had the keys to the Premier's limousine, he swore up and down that the reason he broke his tax promise is that there wasn't enough revenue to fund his election commitments. Remember all that talk about the deficit left behind? He said that there wasn't enough money coming in to support his spending initiatives, and therefore he had to break his promise. He swore up and down, but again, the Premier broke that promise. When we look at the numbers now, three and a half years later, it shows that that is not even close to reality.

The McGuinty government's own 2007 budget, the one we're debating today—this fellow here—shows that in 2007 he spent a massive \$7.7 billion more than he promised in the fiscal plan he released during the election; \$7.7 billion more than he said he needed to finance all of his promises. And after the one-time revenue crunch in 2004 that was detailed in the Peters report, revenue actually rebounded to \$3.1 billion more than McGuinty said he needed when he made those fateful election promises. In fact, that's the level of revenue even before you count one penny—even more than one penny—of the so-called health tax on the middle class and hard-pressed seniors in the province of Ontario. Even that \$3.1-billion cushion above what the health tax was was not enough for Dalton McGuinty and his greedy spending. He said that he needed more, and that's where this health tax comes in, fuelling runaway spending in violation of his own election spending promises, some \$7.7 billion—

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member for Erie—Lincoln is referring to the member from Ottawa South, the Premier of Ontario, by his full name over and over again in this speech. I believe that the Speaker earlier today advised the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal that we were to refer to members by their ridings or their titles.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll help you remind members that yes, you're to refer to members by their ridings. The Chair will listen carefully and therefore won't allow anybody to use names. We'll all refer to them by their ridings.

Mr. Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. I should have made it more clear: either by riding or by the minister's or the Premier's position.

Mr. Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I'm just following what I hear my colleagues across the floor say regularly: the "McGuinty government." I don't see why—

Ms. Smith: That's okay.

Mr. Hudak: That's okay? Okay.

The McGuinty government has \$7.7 billion more in revenue that has come in than they said they needed to keep all of their campaign promises. Despite that, despite the \$7.7 billion in additional room, they continue to break promises. That is almost three times the value of the so-called health tax, which we know flows into the consolidated revenue fund; it doesn't flow into health care at all.

So what does this mean for jobs, for the state of the economy? I've already talked about the runaway spending that would make David Peterson and Bob Rae envious if they were twins.

Mr. Bisson: They are.

Mr. Hudak: They are, now, aren't they? I guess they're birds of a feather now. We see that Dalton McGuinty has even outpaced those former—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: I don't know if they get along that well, but the point being that the McGuinty government has outspent even the halcyon days of runaway spending of the Peterson and Rae governments. This has impacted, obviously, on confidence in the province's books. It will mean higher taxes if the economy slows down even more if this government continues down their current path. I will talk about the hidden tax hike that was part of the budget. But sadly, the high taxes, high energy prices and runaway-spending fiscal policies of the McGuinty government have had a devastating impact on the manufacturing sector in the province of Ontario.

I was just in Cornwall, as a matter of fact, this week-end in support of an outstanding young businessman, a former councillor in Cornwall, Chris Savard, our candidate in the upcoming election. It was a great event, and I was pleased to be there with him. I had some meetings with local municipal leaders at the same time. Sadly, Cornwall and eastern Ontario have effectively become the poster children of manufacturing job losses under the McGuinty government. We all know, of course, that just by unfortunate coincidence, the day I was there was the one-year anniversary of Domtar shutting its gates—approximately 1,290 employees out of work, a plant with over 100 years' history in the area—a proud history. Many families and generations of families employed at Domtar found their economic wherewithal at that plant.

They're now out of work and have left the area, finding lower-paying jobs in the service sector when they want to be working in the manufacturing sector. And 1,290 jobs is simply devastating not only to Cornwall but to that eastern Ontario region of the province. It's not only Domtar with its losses; we also have in the area the Nestlé plant in Chesterville, another icon of manufacturing in a much smaller town than Cornwall. When you lose a plant like Nestlé and some 300 jobs, the impact that has on the tax base of a municipality is extremely damaging and worrisome.

Not too far away is Hershey in Smiths Falls. It's not in the same riding, but just up the highway. Hershey in Smiths Falls closed down—another major loss in the area; World's Finest Chocolate factory in Campbellford—I'm going across the province a bit here—ATS, Automated Tooling System in Bowmanville, closed; Harrowsmith Cheese in Harrowsmith; United Tri-Tech Corporation in Cornwall; Satisfied Brake Products. More layoffs.

In my own region in Niagara, Ferranti-Packard in St. Catharines, 212 jobs gone; Bazaar and Novelty in St. Catharines, 200 jobs gone; GM in St. Catharines, 130 jobs gone; Redpath Sugar in Niagara Falls, 20 jobs; Automation Tooling Systems in Cambridge, Burlington and the neighbourhood, 169 jobs; Rheem Canada in Hamilton, 150 jobs; Ball Packaging in Burlington, 300 jobs.

The list, unfortunately, goes on and on as part of a 120,000 exodus of well-paying manufacturing jobs under the Dalton McGuinty government in the province of Ontario, unfortunately, with no end in sight, because I see no policies as part of this government's high-tax, high-spending, high-energy-rate policies that will turn this around—120,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs.

They talk a bit about minimum wage as part of their budget. They talk about transfers to low-income families, but the best social program is a well-paying job. The best social program in the province of Ontario and Canada in our history is a well-paying job. The best way to move people from poverty into work is through employment and well-paying jobs. No wonder the concentration on the minimum wage is part of the Dalton McGuinty economic platform suddenly, after they got beat up by the NDP for months and years on end; no wonder the emphasis—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Well, it's true. I think they've been on this one for quite some time. No wonder the focus on the minimum wage, because that's the kind of jobs that the McGuinty government has created in the province of Ontario. We've seen a significant shift from well-paying manufacturing jobs like Domtar, like Cascade, like Rheem, like Ball Packaging into the low end of the economic ladder. Burger-flipping jobs are replacing the blue-collar jobs in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, and no end in sight.

I've got an extensive list here of the sad closures and losses. I know my friend from Timmins—James Bay, I

know my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka as our natural resources critics and my colleague from Oshawa, Mr. Ouellette, for northern development and mines are aghast at this government's inaction when it comes to the massive exodus of jobs from the forest industry sector, which is absolutely devastating to towns like Smooth Rock Falls, when jobs pack up and leave. It's devastating across all of the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

1700

Mr. Hudak: I guess my friend from Ottawa thinks it's socialist to talk about the loss of manufacturing jobs. He thinks the only way to solve this, I guess, is to take them over. I believe the answer is simple, I say to my friend from Ottawa: reduce the tax burden on the business sector. Make sure that you have an energy policy that actually encourages energy supply, to help reduce energy rates. Make sure you have a stable and predictable government that doesn't spend like—a bunch of pirates on shore leave would show more restraint than the McGuinty government. That's how to help bring manufacturing jobs to the province.

I pointed out that I'd compare that record any day: a million net new manufacturing jobs that had come into Ontario before the Dalton McGuinty government, and some 120,000 jobs lost under the Dalton McGuinty government. I don't think they're ignoring it; they just don't understand it, and they're making excuses for it. But I think they should know, and they've forgotten, that the only way to finance programs like health care, like education, like more police on the streets, like better highways, is to ensure that you have a healthy economy that's creating jobs, well-paying jobs, because that increased revenue then comes into the treasury to help pay for programs in the long run. In many ways it's like David Peterson, déjà vu all over again: a big spending party as the economy slows down. That leaves you in a lot of trouble if you can't spend within your means.

There are a number of initiatives that I want to get to in detail in the budget after I've set out some preliminary comments on the runaway spending and the broken promise of Dalton McGuinty when it comes to controlling his own spending to finance his campaign commitments, and the devastating impact on jobs in communities like Cornwall, St. Catharines, Hamilton and Burlington. This government is now suddenly boasting about its plan to reduce capital taxes. Well, isn't this something? This is actually the fourth position of the Dalton McGuinty government on the capital tax in the last three or four years. I think they've had more positions on this than the first chapter of the Kama Sutra when it comes to capital taxes.

Laughter.

Mr. Hudak: I'm glad somebody appreciated that line.

The initial reaction under the previous Progressive Conservative government—Ernie Eves had committed to reducing the capital tax and eliminating it by 2008. Their initial position was that that was a giveaway to our rich friends. Remember that? Dalton McGuinty's gang, in

opposition, said that that was a giveaway to our rich corporate friends and they would not reduce capital taxes. That was position number one.

Then, in their first Liberal budget in 2004, they were suddenly in favour of eliminating the capital tax. They were vehemently opposed, to get votes in the last election; then, less than a year later, they're vehemently in favour of eliminating the capital tax—so maybe not that vehemently, because the schedule, if anybody actually believed it, would eliminate the capital tax by 2012. So initially it was going to stay in place. The PCs had a policy of getting rid of it by 2008, by the legislation before the House at the time. And now it was going to be eliminated by the McGuinty government in 2012. That's quite a turnaround. But then, shortly thereafter, under then-Finance Minister Duncan, the third Liberal position in less than three years' time was that they had a small reduction in the capital tax and would eliminate it in 2010 instead of 2012 if they could afford it, whatever that means.

Now we see in this budget, as part of the bill before us, the fourth and, I would assume final—but who knows?—position on the capital tax, which is to eliminate it by 2010, finally, in legislation, but oh, my goodness, what a torturous turn this one has been. And I don't know why you'd trust them when they've had four different positions in the last three and a half years alone. Far be it from them to boast about reducing capital taxes when, if they hadn't had their initial position, they would have been eliminated by 2008, which, I say to my friend from Ottawa, would have helped keep some of those jobs in Ontario and encouraged more investment. That's what you say in 2007's budget, but a few years ago capital taxes were gifts for rich friends. Now they sing from a different songbook.

That's why a number of us over here could barely contain some chuckles when Finance Minister Sorbara indicated that they were going to reduce business taxes with a business education tax cut. As I said, we welcome reductions in the tax rate. There's no doubt about it: We feel that lower taxes will help us to get back on a better economic footing like we were under the previous government before Dalton McGuinty jacked up taxes to among the highest in North America.

Ms. Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It seems the member for Erie–Lincoln's having some trouble with short-term recall today. It would be the member for Ottawa south or the Premier of Ontario, and I wish he would stop referring to members—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Let the Chair explain just a little bit. I've been here about 14 years, and it's not uncommon to refer to governments and identify them by a name. That's why the Chair has been allowing that today. I don't encourage it, but it seems to be a practice that's followed here.

Mr. Hudak: Again, I have no problem with short-term recall because, as I said, I just outlined the McGuinty government has had four different positions on the capital tax in the last three and a half years. If you

recall your short-term memory, that's more positions than in the first chapter of the Kama Sutra, I'd say to my friend from Nipissing.

To hear the government boast that they're reducing business education taxes: Come on. We all know that one of the first bills that the McGuinty government brought into this Legislative Assembly was the biggest increase in tax rates in the history of this province on working families, seniors and businesses. My goodness, what kind of gift is this anyway when it will be 2014 by the time that this BET—business education tax—reduction is fully implemented?

I mean, this is not just Dalton McGuinty hoping that he's re-elected, but maybe he's hoping that there will be a second Dalton McGuinty Jr. government, for example. Come on. Nobody believes this guy is going to be around till 2014. I don't know how many promises there have been of this nature that are seven years down the road. I know my colleagues—and I'll get to it later hopefully in the child tax benefit. Similarly, you don't keep the promise for three years of your government and then you expect taxpayers to believe that seven years down the road you're going to do it. Hardly. Not hardly.

Finally, we're seeing some understanding from the McGuinty government that high taxes cost jobs, but there seems to be a conversion on the road to defeat, that suddenly they've found this religion and even when they find that religion, I don't know if there is strict adherence to it. They've had four positions on the capital tax in three and a half years and a business education tax reduction that is not fulfilled until 2014.

Let's not forget what's happening here in the city of Toronto today. The McGuinty government conveyed to the Miller administration—if that's okay, I say to my friend from Nipissing, the Miller administration—new taxing authority. Every day you wake up and you read in your local newspaper—and I know my friend from Ottawa West—Nepean is a big fan of David Miller. He'll see all of his crazy tax plans. They spend all night thinking about what they're going to tax next. What was the one about the video machines over the gas pumps at your local gas stations? These keep me entertained. I've got a 100-litre tank in the Avalanche. I need these things to keep my mind focused if it's a little dull at 100 litres, and they want to tax them.

It's incredible. Every day you read about David Miller's new plans to tax things from billboards to housing exchanges to the hard-pressed hospitality sector. Where does this come from? Courtesy of the Dalton McGuinty government with the City of Toronto Act to give permission for these massive tax hikes in the city of Toronto that are going over just about as well as this dud of a budget.

Let me move on to another tax item before hopefully having time to get back to the child tax credit. There were two items that were not in the budget speech; surprising. We know the one, of course, because it's been embarrassing to the Minister of Finance to ad-lib a \$50-million grant to the Magna corporation, still with no real

details released over what the \$50-million grant to Magna corporation is going to be all about. It wasn't even in the budget speech; he had to ad-lib it on the floor, and it was about 24 hours before some key members of the media and local staff picked up on the ad-lib of \$50 million. I mean, this is your equivalent of a Magna budget. The \$50-million gift to Magna wasn't even in the budget papers.

1710

And the same thing, not in the budget papers: a new tax specifically to the Victor project just outside of Attawapiskat in northeastern Ontario, where they've changed the tax regime substantially. I understand—and I hope my colleagues across the way prove me wrong—that the company, the proponent, De Beers and the First Nations who are beneficiaries and partners on parts of this project, the first time they heard about it was in budget lock-up. There were no discussions, no signal the government was going to jack up the tax rates. They signed out in the budget that it goes up to some 13%, after hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent, a billion dollars committed—my goodness, it sounds like a banana republic over there: increasing taxes with no notice whatsoever on a project that is already under way, with benefit impact agreements with the First Nations in the area, many different First Nations that have worked closely with the company, to benefit from jobs and investments, based on the profits. Now these profits will be reduced because of the Dalton McGuinty government's greedy tax grab at the last minute. Do you think President Chavez of Venezuela wouldn't play these kinds of tricks that the McGuinty government is playing in this budget? They just signed a contract. They finally got a contract with Crystallex, right? They've agreed with the Chavez government in Venezuela that Crystallex is to do a project in Venezuela—and not even Chavez is playing these kinds of tricks that were in your budget, of a mining tax hike.

What does this mean? You may recall that the Mike Harris government, as one of its many initiatives to support mineral investment in the province of Ontario, lowered the mining tax rate to among the lowest in Canada, and also had a special benefit for mines that were in remote areas. Those investments have paid off in projects like the Victor mine outside of Attawapiskat: a 5% tax rate. What this budget does is it jacks it up to some 13%, with no notice, and what kind of signal—I guess maybe they're laughing over there, at the Ministry of Finance, or whoever came up with the idea; I don't think it was ministry staff. I can't believe they would do this. I certainly know that the hard working civil servants at the Ministry of Mines are probably apoplectic about this Chavez-like turn. I know the Minister of Mines is going to be fighting against this, and I'll support him in any initiatives he has to fight against this.

We worked hard to make decisions to lower the tax rate to invest in Operation Treasure Hunt, to streamline the Mining Act, to reduce the red tape burden, to encourage investment, and we've been paid off with

benefits and jobs and investment in the province of Ontario. And now you see this banana-republic-like attack by this backdoor tax hike. It's absolutely shameful, a ploy that Chavez wouldn't try on his worst day.

In fact, you'll recall that the initiatives that the previous PC government of Mike Harris brought forward elevated Ontario from way down the list to number one, not only in Canada but in the world, in mineral investment attractiveness, in the Fraser Institute survey.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Give Ernie some credit.

Mr. Hudak: Ernie Eves was the finance minister, as part of the Mike Harris government, I say to my friend. Ernie Eves was the finance minister, as part of the Mike Harris government, that brought in these initiatives that made us number one in the world in mineral investment attractiveness. I will say that under the McGuinty government we've moved down, I think, to number seven or number eight—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: No, no.

Mr. Bisson: We're down to number 11.

Mr. Hudak: Number 11, my friend from Timmins—James Bay says. Number one, like going over the falls in a barrel—what do you think, I say to my friend from Ottawa, this Chavez-like manoeuvre is going to do for our attractiveness? Why would you, as a company that can invest anywhere in the world, want to invest in Ontario when you see, behind closed doors, the finance minister jacking up the tax rates with no notice, no consultation, and ripping up an existing deal? It's unbelievable, and I do hope that the government will back down from this because of the impact that it can have not only on this project, but the First Nations in the area that can benefit from it, people from as far south from the project as Timmins—it will benefit that part of the province—and also the unfortunate signal that it sends to other companies in the world interested in investing in Ontario. We have great mineral potential, we've got solid policies in place, and this banana-republic-like manoeuvre is very unfortunate and I hope it's reversed.

Let me give you an example. Chile was ranked number two on the mining potential index and in one year it dropped to 14th due to controversy over mining royalties. I fear—as my colleague said, we're already down to number 11—how much further Ontario may dip because of this bizarre move by the Minister of Finance.

I don't know if I'm joining dots that don't mean to be joined, but as I said, there were two items that are part of this budget that were not part of the budget speech but are impactful: the sneaky increase in the mining royalty on the Victor mine project, and at the same time a \$50-million grant to the Magna corporation for a project that is not clear. It looks like it's going towards the Magna institute, a private university with the company.

Coincidentally, I could estimate that the mining change on the Victor mine project is about a \$50-million tax hike. Maybe I'm wrong and I hope the parliamentary assistant will correct me if I'm wrong. But I wonder if, at the last minute, when the finance minister said, "Hey,

I've got to flow this \$50 million to Magna as part of my budget and we need to make up that revenue somewhere," they said, "Aha, we'll screw over that project Victor because it's up in Bisson's riding. We'll increase their taxes to pay for the benefit to Magna."

I say to my colleagues from the north here this afternoon, what are they going to say in northern Ontario to contemplate that a tax was introduced behind closed doors on a northern business that's going to invest in the local economy to support a successful business in southern Ontario? We already know about the impact and the feeling in the north about resources being drained down to the south. But now look at this potential connection between an increase in the mining tax to help fund a project for the Magna corporation, within 24 hours, incidentally, of them making a multi-billion dollar bid for the Chrysler corporation. They're hardly crying poor over at Magna corporation—a \$50-million investment.

I do hope the minister or the parliamentary assistant will correct me if I'm wrong, but the Magna project has an optimistic projection of some 60 students graduating over the next five years as part of your Magna budget.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: The culture minister is right: It's your Magna budget—the \$50-million grant to the Magna corporation.

If there are 60 students graduating every five years, that's an \$830,000 subsidy from Ontario taxpayers for this project at Magna. If we understand as well—and correct me—it's not an open application process for anybody to apply. A student at home watching could not put her application forward for the Magna university, but it's for mid-level career engineers already working in industry, drawing from eligible applicants within the Magna corporation. It's not of general benefit, as far as I understand. It wasn't a competitive process to see where the \$50 million could be invested. It's for one corporation, on the eve of a multi-billion dollar bid for Chrysler, to benefit their own employees, at a subsidy of \$830,000 per year.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague from Lanark—Carleton is likewise suspicious about the motivation of the McGuinty government towards this project.

As I said, its absence from the budget speech I think is very telling, and we intend to pursue this issue further in the Ontario Legislature. This seems to be entirely different from the previous investments in the auto sector, because I'm not aware of a single job being created by this \$50 million. The Magna university is opening up I think this fall for its first students. It's already under way, so it's \$50 million coming in at the very end of the process. Unless I am mistaken, not a single job will be created as part of this \$50-million gift to Magna at the same time that northern Ontario is having its taxes increased, working families and seniors are seeing no benefit from this budget, and taxes in Ontario are now among the highest for business in North America. Seniors and working families are having trouble making

ends meet because of the increased taxes and fees they face courtesy of the McGuinty government.

1720

My last point of focus is the child tax benefit. I know some of my colleagues will get to this in a little bit. I found Randall Denley's recent column in the *Ottawa Citizen* very interesting. We all know the Ontario child benefit—if there's anything that people will remember, and I don't think they'll remember much about this budget other than that there is nothing in it for middle-class families or seniors—begins to be phased out at \$20,000 per year. So a total payment for a one-child family with \$25,000 income in 2007 will be a grand total of \$80. Mind you, they also now pay \$300 in the so-called health tax, courtesy of the Dalton McGuinty government; when phased in more in 2008, it will be \$200 in benefits, \$300 in higher taxes. It's an extraordinarily high rate of marginal taxation with the claw-back in the child benefit coupled with the Dalton McGuinty health tax.

Randall Denley of the *Ottawa Citizen* says this—this is his column of Saturday, March 31—“By making a new social welfare program the centrepiece of his budget, Premier Dalton McGuinty is making a clear statement of values. He's telling us that government's job is to provide handouts, not to encourage and reward individual effort and entrepreneurship. Just to underline the point, McGuinty dismissed tax cuts as ‘trinkets and baubles.’”

Certainly we on the Progressive Conservative side of this Legislature believe that the best benefit to help out low-income families is a good, well-paying job to help them move up the economic ladder as opposed to Dalton McGuinty's, as Mr. Denley says, concentration on providing handouts as opposed to hand-ups.

Mr. Denley goes on to note quite well that Dalton McGuinty's government has failed to keep its campaign promise to end the clawback. He says, “McGuinty campaigned on a promise to end this unequal treatment. As a result of his new Ontario child benefit ... that same parent on welfare will receive \$11,660 by 2011.” The year 2011 is significant because that's the year that we're supposed to believe that Dalton McGuinty's government, if re-elected, would actually implement the program—another four years plus down the road after three and a half years of breaking promises.

Mr. Prue: Another election cycle.

Mr. Hudak: Another election cycle, as my colleague from Beaches rightly says.

Mr. Denley: “As a result of his new Ontario child benefit ... that same parent on welfare will receive \$11,660 by 2011. So after eight years, the person on welfare will be \$2 ahead of where they should have been in 2003.”

So they have to wait eight years, or 2011, and at the end of the day, that person on welfare will be \$2 ahead of where they should have been in 2003 if the McGuinty government had kept its promise.

“The challenge for the McGuinty government,” Mr. Denley says, “was how to take an unmet four-year-old

election promise and turn it into a shiny new program. Just saying that you were ending an unfairness for people on welfare, eight years after you promised to do so, isn't a winner.” Clearly so. So I guess we'll see the broken promise from the McGuinty government continue for another eight years.

Mr. Denley concludes, “McGuinty says his child benefit is ‘a powerful economic strategy.’ What low-income families really need are those \$20-an-hour manufacturing jobs that have been disappearing at an astounding rate during the McGuinty regime. What offers low-income families the greater hope—a better job or a better handout?”

Clearly we in the Progressive Conservative Party believe a better job is the best way to move forward and to help one's family.

The last point I want to get to deals with the property assessment system. I could probably do an hour on this issue alone. The number of reversals by the McGuinty government on this issue rivals their reversals on the capital tax—several positions in the last few years alone. After initially rejecting assessment averaging—go back to one of their early budget bills where they actually eliminated the schedule for assessment averaging, criticizing assessment averaging. So they were against it a couple of years ago; now they're all for it as we get close to an election. The point being that assessment averaging does nothing to stop the scourge of skyrocketing property assessments in the province of Ontario. John Tory and the Progressive Conservatives have brought forward a policy to cap annual assessment increases at 5% per year as long as you maintain ownership of your home—real protection for taxpayers from skyrocketing property assessments. Dalton McGuinty? No such thing. He tries to hide it in the language he uses around the policy, but, in reality, after four years of assessment increases, you get your bill and then you climb up to that over a four-year period. For example, a home that had an average increase of 12.5% last assessment, last year—that was an average home. Let's say they experience a similar increase for the next three years. When they get their bill at the end of the day, it's about a 48% or 50% whammy. Instead of putting the knife to you all at once, they put the knife to you in four jabs and claim that is a better policy.

Let me give you an example. We were at Mr. Cook's home for an assessment-related event. PC policy would cap his increase at 5% a year over five years, meaning his home's value would increase by \$21,000 in the first year and \$22,000 in the second year, with a 5% cap. Under the McGuinty regime, if it went up 12.5% annually over four years, it would leap to \$77,000 in the fourth year; it would start at \$54,000, \$61,000, \$68,000 and \$77,000. Under the John Tory plan, his assessment would be \$25,000 over four years; under the McGuinty government's phoney plan, \$77,000. Higher taxes for seniors like Mr. Cook.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bisson: I appreciate the support from Mr. Hudak, the member for Erie–Lincoln, when he talks about the issue in regard to the diamond tax this government has imposed on De Beers. We may as well call it what it is: This is the Victor diamond tax. It's as simple as that.

This is a move by the provincial government to change again, two thirds of the way into it. What's happened is that De Beers, for the better part of 10 years, has been working at exploration and making a decision to go or not go when it came to the development of the Victor diamond mine just west of Attawapiskat. They made a decision based on the economics of the property. One of the decisions was the 5% royalty that would have to be paid on diamonds that are extracted from the ground.

Here's the interesting part: I believe—and I don't think I'll be corrected on this—the original reduction from 10% to 5% on the royalties paid was originally done by the Liberal government, by the McGuinty government, when they were first elected. They argued the royalties are 10% across Ontario, and because it's so expensive to develop a mine north of 50, they reduced the royalties to 5% as an incentive to attract investment north of 50 so that we could work at trying to create economic development. Here we are: De Beers makes a decision based on that and other things the company had to do, including what the royalty rates were, and they find out as they're bringing the mine into operation that the provincial McGuinty government has decided to whack them with a tripling of the royalties on that diamond mine. I'm just saying that I concur with my friend the member for Erie–Lincoln, Mr. Hudak, who says this is like a banana republic.

You've got to understand what mining's about: Mining is about finding money for exploration and then bringing a mine online. You're competing with absolutely everybody. Having a tax regime as bad as they've got in the Northwest Territories is not a way to attract mining to Ontario.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Thank you for giving me the chance and the opportunity to comment on the speech from the member for Erie–Lincoln.

I've been listening to him for the last hour, I believe, and I don't expect him to support the budget because there's no doubt in my mind they have a different approach to many different issues. Of course they are against public health care, they are against public education, they're against investing more money in the poor segment of our society, against the children.

I'm proud and honoured to be a part of a government that believes strongly we have to continue to invest in public education, in post-secondary education, in our infrastructure, in our schools. It's very important for all of us to keep investing in our public infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

I was listening to him when he said the government of Ontario in the last budgets handed out to many different people. But I want to tell him that it's important to all of us to give a chance to vulnerable people among us to start a new life, to support our kids—more than one million

kids. I am proud to be a part of a government that issued a budget to support the poor people among us, to give them the support to come walk with us. It's the only way we'll have a prosperous province.

1730

This budget talks about different elements, talks about the environment, education, health care and infrastructure. It also talks about attracting more business and supporting many different municipalities that pay high taxes and education tax; that's why we give them support and they can attract more investment to their municipalities.

The member for Erie–Lincoln, I believe—I don't know how he got some information. Maybe it's due to his ideology, part of his government, part of his party to go against the public interest. I believe strongly we have a great budget and hopefully all of us will be convinced and support that budget.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I'm very pleased to offer a few comments with respect to the excellent response to the budget offered by my colleague the member for Erie–Lincoln.

There are many areas that I could speak about, but I would like to focus in on one specific area. That's the issue of the McGuinty health tax and the impact that has had on my riding of Whitby–Ajax and Durham region in particular, because this, of course, was the first of many broken promises by this government. When I walk into my riding and speak to people about the effect of this health tax, they reasonably believe that this money is being used in order to provide better health care for the citizens of Ontario. They're initially shocked to find out that that's not the case, that this money is going into the general revenues and being subject to the same waste and disregard for the taxpayers that's being shown by this government in so many other areas.

But then, when my constituents take a look at the state of health care in Durham region, it's not at all surprising that this tax isn't being used for that purpose. I have to say this is no criticism whatsoever of the hard working doctors and nurses and health care professionals in our area. They're doing an excellent job with very limited resources. But the fact of the matter is that in terms of what's happening in our area, in one of the fastest-growing regions of Ontario, in an area that's already significantly underfunded with respect to the rest of the province, we're not having health care spending increased. No, we're being told they have to slash \$8 million from the health care budget—\$8 million from services to the most vulnerable people in our community: mental health issues, children's mental health issues, addiction programs and treatment.

It's incomprehensible to me how this can be. Many of the residents of Durham region are asking the same question. This is probably the biggest issue that they're facing. I think it's something this government needs to turn its attention to.

Mr. Prue: It is a pleasure to stand here and to comment on my colleague from Erie–Lincoln. He gave a very

impassioned, long and detailed speech, lasting a full hour, pointing out many of the flaws, many of those areas of the budget which are not going to deliver what has been promised. But it was towards the end of his speech when he got very impassioned again about ending child poverty that my ears perked up. We know this province is one of a number of provinces—in fact, the wealthiest province—in Canada that choose to claw back the national child benefit which is given to every poor child in Canada. This province, among others but alone among the wealthiest provinces, has determined that they want to claw back that national benefit when the child lives in a family whose parents are either on Ontario Works or on the Ontario disability support plan.

The way he described this I think is true. The amount of the phase-in that is anticipated in this budget is minuscule. The amount of money that a child is going to get in Ontario in this budget year amounts to a maximum of \$250, or about \$5 a week. That is the maximum you can get if you live in a family where the parents' combined income is \$20,000 or less. He talked quite clearly and carefully about the phase-in until the year 2011. I think that needs to be addressed and I plan to do that in my own speech. But what he didn't talk about, and what I think needs to be talked about, is the 2011 phase-out of the clawback, because that is taking place simultaneously, so that people who are having that money clawed back and who can ill afford it will not see until 2011 the phase-out of a program that was promised to be phased out in 2003. He did touch on that, and I commend him for doing so.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Erie—Lincoln, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Hudak: I thank my colleagues for all their comments. There are a couple of things I wanted to just leave some final notes on at the end of my comments with respect to home assessments. We have a letter you may have seen in the Toronto Star of Monday, March 26, from Bob Topp, Coalition After Property Tax Reform. It seems to support the position I brought forward today. He says:

"Ontario Finance Minister Greg Sorbara's plans to deal with property assessment hikes over four-year cycles is just tinkering. It doesn't fix the unfairness. It means the property tax pain for hundreds of thousands of Ontarians will be inflicted over a longer period, when their double-digit assessment hikes lead to higher property taxes."

He cites an example:

"In the last assessment in 2005, more than 100,000 properties in Ontario were up between 30% and 150%, compared to the average provincial increase of 12%."

I think all of my colleagues in the assembly probably have had a constituent who has seen his or her assessment increase by 150% in previous assessments. If you extrapolate that over a four-year period, just for the sake of rounding it as a two-year increase, that's a 300% increase that that individual or senior would receive over a four-year cycle, meaning that under the McGuinty gov-

ernment's proposed assessment averaging, her assessment would increase by 75% per year. I know that all of my colleagues have seen constituents with those types of assessment increases, versus the John Tory plan, which would be a 5% maximum increase as long as the home ownership is maintained.

I hope I get a chance to speak later. I know my colleague and fellow finance critic from Beaches—East York will address the minimum wage issue. I've got to tell you that, to the credit of the NDP, this is an issue they've championed, the \$10 wage, consistently for some time. The McGuinty government opposed it lock, stock and barrel, and then suddenly, just before the budget, they emerged and upped the ante by a quarter. I think that was one of the most duplicitous, sneaky and phony promises that I've seen.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: It is that time again in the day—which happens to me all too often—where I begin a speech but cannot finish it. I call it my bifurcated speech. This one is actually one third today and two thirds, I guess, on the next occasion.

Today I want to talk mostly about Bill 187 because I want to get into the budget and how it relates to Bill 187. But I want to talk mostly about what is contained in this bill.

For people who are watching on television, you might wonder. You saw the bravado, you heard all the great speeches, you saw the Liberals standing up and clapping literally for everything, even though sometimes it wasn't in their best interests, as the finance minister spoke. Then you might wonder, "What is happening here? We have a bill, Bill 187, which isn't exactly on point with the budget." Just for the edification perhaps of some of my colleagues but more so for those people who may be watching, it is quite standard for a government to introduce two or three bills following a budget. I would take it that since we have a truncated time here, a limited amount of time between now and the next election on October 10, everything has been jammed together in this bill under the vernacular of Bill 187. It contains a great many things that would surprise people that are non-budgetary in nature, and they're all rolled into one bill.

Interruption.

Mr. Prue: I think somebody is about to lose their BlackBerry. Somebody was calling the Liberal backbench.

The changes that I looked through—and there are some 40 of them—include such things as the credit union changes, which we would welcome, by and large; property taxes, which I'm going to talk about; the child benefit package; the royalty for diamonds; the Securities Act regarding mergers; and the status of the artist. All of these legislations are contained within the body of Bill 187 and are in part only related to the budget, but they're contained within that bill. It's an omnibus way of getting a whole bunch of legislation through under the rubric of the budget because, as the finance minister and the Premier know only too well, every government backbencher,

no matter what is contained within this Bill 187, will support it because to not support it would cause the budget to fail and the government to fall. I have no illusions, nor should anyone else, that this Bill 187 will pass largely unchanged, unscathed, and it will become law at some point.

1740

I just want to talk about what is contained within Bill 187, so everyone should know. The first thing that disturbed me and continues to disturb me—and my colleague from Erie–Lincoln talked about this in his own party's way—was the changes to the Assessment Act. What is contained within the body of Bill 187 is the provision that assessments of properties will not take place every year, but will now take place on a rolling average of every four years.

At the outset one might say, why is the government passing this? The answer is very simple. They are passing this because this is a political hot potato for them, on a government that has chosen, up until this time, to do absolutely nothing when it comes to property tax reform. I remember those heady days back in 2002 and 2003 leading up to the election when the then leader of the official opposition stood and talked about property tax reform, how it needed to be changed and how he used to mock the Conservatives by having changed their very own property tax bill that led to this some eight times in the final four years of the mandate of the Eves-Harris governments. They mocked them and said that things had to be done to change it. It had to be more workable; it had to be understandable; it had to have people have confidence in the system.

What they've introduced here does absolutely none of that. Instead of having your house assessed every year, it's now going to be assessed every four years. There was an assessment back in 2005 and the next one won't be done until 2009. For the government seeking re-election in October 2007, this is a hot potato that they don't want to surface. They're going to pretend that they're actually doing something, but the reality is that nothing whatsoever will be done. People will get property tax increases. They won't see it on a yearly basis, but when they see it every four years, it can potentially be four times as large. In four years, you may see, and you will see, properties doubling in value. You may see properties which were assessed at half a million dollars suddenly becoming million-dollar properties because that assessment has taken some four years. I'm not exaggerating the point. There were many, many properties in this province—and I salute Bob Topp and his whole group of people who are out there showing the tens of thousands or the hundreds of thousands of properties that had escalated in value more than 25% to 30% in single years, some escalating in value 100% in single years.

All this is going to do is get rid of a political hot potato and pretend the government is doing something. It leaves the whole concept of current value assessment pretty much as it is, and it does not change any of the government legislation to actually mitigate against the

property taxes being out of whack and mitigate against that whole feeling that people have that they're being ripped off by the system.

There is nothing in this portion of the bill on which I can comment favourably. Sure it's good, if somebody gets an increase, that it's phased in over four years, and somebody who gets a tax decrease—and that does happen too—sees it immediately, but I have to ask you, what does that mean for the municipalities who are collecting the tax?

I turn to my colleague the former mayor of Pickering, now the parliamentary assistant to the minister. He has to know that if you phase in the increases over four years, but if you give all of the money in a refund for those who actually get a tax deduction, it means that the municipalities that collect it will not have sufficient monies, in some cases, to do the job they need to do.

I'll put it in very simple terms. If your taxes go up \$100, it's phased in over four years: You get four \$25 increases. If your taxes go down \$100, you get it all in one fell swoop. So the municipality, in the first year, is out \$75 on those two properties, is out \$50 in the second year, is out \$25 in the third year and only gets rationalized at the end. So municipalities across this province that have housing prices that are fluctuating—some that are going up and some that are going down—are going to see that in the short term, in the first, second and third years of this four-year cycle, the value of the taxes that they collect actually declines. This is going to cause a great many problems to municipalities. Nothing that has been explored here—not by the minister, not by the parliamentary assistant; I hope they'll comment on this—will mitigate against the tax losses to the municipality in the beginning of the cycle. That's a very real question that I think needs to be answered. The province has said they will step in and mitigate the losses against the city of Toronto for the pooling effects, but there is nothing here for the 480 municipalities that will suffer in the interim in this four-year cycle.

There's no long-term plan. There is absolutely no long-term plan. It's business as usual, as far as this government is concerned, throughout the four-year cycle. There's nothing here to remove the volatility and there's nothing here to enhance the fairness that the minister spoke so often about wanting to do and which André Marin, the Ombudsman, said was absolutely essential when he went in and looked at the whole problem around MPAC. There is nothing in this for renters. There is nothing in the program that will help those who rent properties in Ontario, particularly those who are tenants in large apartment buildings and apartment blocks; be they in Toronto or Ottawa or Hamilton or Thunder Bay or London or Windsor; there is nothing here for them. The people who rent in apartments pay disproportionately higher taxes than those who own houses and live in those properties. In fact, in some cities, like my own city of Toronto, it is estimated that it is sometimes three times as high. In Mississauga they pay only 1.7, in Ottawa 1.6 times as much as a comparable property that

is home-owned. You can see the real difference when you look at identical buildings, one being an apartment building, side by side with a condominium-owned property. You can see the difference in the taxes that are paid on each of those buildings and on each of those units. There is nothing that this government has done within this legislation to help people who are tenants and who are paying taxes that are far too high.

There is nothing in this legislation that will help the aged, the infirm and those on fixed income to continue to live in their houses. There is no tax, there are no grants, there is no program that will help people who are whacked with high taxes over that four-year cycle to try to remain in their homes, absolutely nothing; it didn't even deserve a mention in their budget.

There is nothing in this that will do anything about seasonal property owners. When I went around the province, as did my colleagues the Conservatives, asking people about the taxes they paid, one of the real things that was raised over and over again was people who own seasonal properties. We live in a country and in a province that is blessed with many lakes and rivers and wonderful places where people like to spend their time and recreation. It is not uncommon, and it is not just for the rich, that people own these small properties where they could put a trailer, where there could be a cottage, where they could camp on them. They own those properties, and there is nothing whatsoever in this legislation that recognizes the seasonal nature of the properties that people own and the reality of how much money they pay in property taxes.

In fact, we have shown I think consistently to this government that people who own these seasonal properties are really paying far more than they should. They occupy them sometimes for two or three months of the year, but they pay taxes on them for 12. When they occupy them, they often get no services. How many times has this government talked to people from northern Ontario particularly who have no hydro, no water, no sewage, no municipal services, no garbage pickup, no access to the libraries, no access to a town, sometimes don't even have a road going into them, yet they pay taxes to the max. The people who are there quite frankly have to question why they are paying for 12 months of municipal taxes whereas in some cases they get absolutely no municipal service. There's no discussion whatsoever in this budget or within Bill 187 of the need to upload the download. If there is one thing that is causing municipal property taxes to escalate at an alarming rate, it is the fact that this government continues the Harris legacy of allowing the download to remain in place.

1750

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has conservatively—and that's with a small "c," Mr. Hudak—estimated that the province of Ontario takes some \$3.2 billion out of the property tax system to fund provincially mandated programs—that's \$3.2 billion of hard-earned taxpayer money out of the property taxes to fund provincial services. These provincial services have

nothing whatsoever to do with property; they have to do with social policy. They involve, amongst other things, Ontario Works or ODSP. It involves child care; it involves land ambulance; it involves public housing. All of the social benefits that flow from this are taken from the municipalities, and the Premier and the finance minister back in those days in 2002-03 said that this was wrong, that it shouldn't continue and that the upload should take place.

Although I would commend the government for the tiny, tiny ways of looking at the uploads, so that the government now pays its fair share of land ambulance, because they didn't before, and now pays its fair share of the public health proportion, which they didn't do before, there has been virtually nothing done over the four years of this mandate to redress that problem. We had hoped in this budget to see that. It didn't happen.

This government promised to end the volatility. There's nothing here to end the volatility of property taxes. It's just going to put them out over a longer period of time and allow them to remain volatile.

Last but not least, and this one here is a shocker to me, the Ombudsman in his report talked about 17 programs, 17 things that had to be done, but 13 or 14 of them were really easy. MPAC, the property assessment at arm's length from the government, said that they could do 10 of them right away. The government said they could do two or three right away too, and in fact they were done, but there were two outstanding reports which needed to be done and which this government in this bill and nowhere else has—they've just turned a blind eye.

The first one, of course, was to—

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: It's getting a little noisy in here.

Interjection: The Speaker is a part of it.

Mr. Prue: The Speaker's a part of it. Okay. We're all having a good discussion. I hope someone's listening.

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: Okay, a few people are listening. Thank you.

The first one was to force MPAC to do what was right by ordinary taxpayers, and that is to give them the information which they claim is proprietary, and to give it to them, so that they would know the reasons and the rationale for their property values that are escalating, on a computer model. It seems to me very reasonable that if the government is going to rely on this, then the government has to make this information available to the public. The finance minister has nothing like that in this bill.

The second one is to reverse the onus. This is a really simple one. It's done in the province of Manitoba. It says that when MPAC says your house is worth a lot more than you think it is, it's up to them to prove it is worth that much, not up to you as a lowly individual taxpayer with limited resources to say it's not. This would completely make it a fairer system that could be implemented, but I am saddened to say that this is not contained within the body of Bill 187 either.

I go on to the child benefit, and I hope I have enough time to finish this before we get to six o'clock. I've got five minutes.

The child benefit: I looked at this as well. This benefit between July 1 of this year, when this Parliament in all likelihood will no longer be sitting, and June 30, 2008, when a new Parliament will return, will grant some \$250 to some of our poorest citizens: our children. Quite frankly, any money is welcome, but I want people to think about what that \$250 involves. It's less than \$5 a week for a child and the child gets the money only if—only if—his parents are both working, or at least one of them is working, and only if the combined income is \$20,000 or less. At the same time, this government is continuing what I consider to be a heinous practice of clawing back monies from the national child benefit. You're giving \$250 with one hand but you are continuing to claw back \$1,250 from kids who are in families where people are on Ontario Works or whose parents are disabled and are on Ontario disability. So you give \$250 but you continue the clawback of \$1,250.

I have to think this is a poverty budget. This is a poverty budget where the Premier talks about alleviating poverty. This is a poverty budget that the Minister of Finance says he's going to do something about. Well, this is a budget, I would suggest, that keeps children whose parents are on Ontario Works or on ODSP—it continues to keep them poor, because although it alleviates \$250, you continue to keep the \$1,250, so they're only \$1,000 ripped off instead of \$1,250. Is that what your government is about? Is that what you want? Is that what you think is a poverty budget? Because it's not what I consider to be a poverty budget; it's what I consider to be a rip-off of those poor children. If you were serious, you would have ended the clawback. If you were serious, you would have done what Dalton McGuinty said back in 2003, that it was a disgrace and that it needed to be ended. But here we are in the fourth year of a four-year cycle talking about ending it in 2011, so, "I couldn't do, I didn't do, what I promised to do. Elect me, and then at the end of that four-year cycle elect me again, so that I can finally keep the promise that I made in the first place."

Mr. Bisson: Isn't it three strikes and you're out in baseball?

Mr. Prue: That's why I'm wearing a baseball tie today. It is the opening of baseball season as well. But anyway, three strikes and you're out.

Okay, so there you have it. You have a budget and you have this legislation in Bill 187 that implements this laudable goal in 2011, so it will take five solid years to get them up to the money you want to give them and five solid years to end the clawback, so all of those kids who are on OW and ODSP will continue to suffer under this government and you will treat every one of those children differently than you treat the children of the working poor. I don't understand where Liberals get off doing this. They're children. They don't know the

difference. They don't know that their parents work or some don't work. They don't know why their father has been hurt in an industrial accident or is disabled. They don't know that. But they do know and they will know poverty.

Mr. Speaker, I see it's about 6 o'clock, and I think that's an appropriate time for me to stop. I will continue on the next day.

HEALTH SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DU SYSTÈME DE SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 26, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 171, An Act to improve health systems by amending or repealing various enactments and enacting certain Acts / *Projet de loi 171, Loi visant à améliorer les systèmes de santé en modifiant ou en abrogeant divers textes de loi et en édictant certaines lois.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? If there's no further debate, Mr. Smitherman has moved second reading of Bill 171. Is it pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I request that the bill go to the social policy committee.

The Deputy Speaker: So ordered.

PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'INTERVENANT PROVINCIAL EN FAVEUR DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 28, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth / *Projet de loi 165, Loi visant à créer la charge d'intervenant provincial en faveur des enfants et des jeunes et à y pourvoir.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? If there is no further debate, Mrs. Chambers has moved second reading of Bill 165. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): Mr. Speaker, I'd really like to refer the bill to the standing committee on justice policy.

The Deputy Speaker: So ordered.

Pursuant to a motion earlier today, this House is adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)	St. Catharines	Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L)	Algoma-Manitoulin	Speaker / Président
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	St. Paul's	Attorney General / procureur général
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L)	Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Markham	Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L)	Eglinton-Lawrence	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Craitor, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Correctional and Emergency Services) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels (Services correctionnels et situations d'urgence)
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the committee of the whole House / Vice-Président, Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjoint parlementaire au ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées

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Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest–Mississauga	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L)	Sarnia–Lambton	Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)	Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Municipal Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Affaires municipales)
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Ajax	
Ferreira, Paul (ND)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
Fonseca, Peter (L)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham–Kent Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Erie–Lincoln	
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and minister responsible for democratic renewal / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales et ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Klees, Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce et au ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Environnement
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	Chief government whip / whip en chef du gouvernement
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Marsales, Judy (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services and minister responsible for women's issues adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires et ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
McMeekin, Ted (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Aldershot	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Transports
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	Chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Milloy, John (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron–Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjointe parlementaire au ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)	Stoney Creek	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture and minister responsible for francophone affairs / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture et ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / York-Nord	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and minister responsible for aboriginal affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles et ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services (Disabilities) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires (Personnes handicapées)
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjoint parlementaire au premier ministre
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Peterson, Tim (IND)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York / Beaches–York-Est	Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Racco, Mario G. (L)	Thornhill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Ramal, Khahl (L)	London–Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Rural Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Affaires rurales)
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House leader / leader parlementaire de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph–Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Victoria–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Housing) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Logement)
Smith, Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Lanark–Carleton	
Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto–Danforth	Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Second Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Tory, John (PC)	Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Agriculture and Food) / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Agriculture et Alimentation)
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Research and Innovation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilkinson, John (L)	Perth–Middlesex	Deputy opposition House leader / leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
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Ernie Parsons, Khalil Ramal
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Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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No. 151A

N° 151A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 3 April 2007

Mardi 3 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 avril 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): Ontario's farmers hoped for respect prior to this year's budget, and, regrettably, Dalton McGuinty paid no attention to the much-publicized farm crises.

Ontario tobacco farmers are in dire straits. With a budget surplus of \$310 million, it's unconscionable that the McGuinty government couldn't find one penny more for farmers. I encourage ag minister Dombrowsky to roll up her sleeves and to work co-operatively with the federal government on this.

Your budget added insult to injury by cutting \$191 million from the ag budget. Turn to page 166: Last year you spent \$809 million on your ministry, plus \$278 million on assistance to the ag sector; that totals just under \$1.1 billion. This year you're spending \$876 million on your ministry plus \$20 million in assistance. That totals \$896 million, or \$190 million less. The result: fewer dollars for beef, pork, tobacco, cash crop.

Dalton McGuinty has broken his election promise to develop a new generation of farm safety nets. The risk management program that farmers have been asking for since June has been ignored once again. When will this government address the farm crisis? How many times do farmers have to come to Queen's Park begging? I'm curious to hear what you'll tell farmers as the election draws near, and I point out that there are tobacco farmers from my riding in the House this afternoon. I ask you to join in welcoming them.

INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED PROFESSIONALS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): The face of Hamilton is diversely multi—multicultural. Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. I put a mint in my mouth because I didn't think I was going to be going yet, but unfortunately, it doesn't look like any of the Liberal members have any statements. So I'm going to start again.

The face of Hamilton is diversely multicultural. Our city is proud to be home to people from around the world. On March 25, I was pleased to celebrate the

advent of the Iranian New Year with hundreds of Iranians from Hamilton and surrounding communities. Together, we marked Norouz, symbolizing the first day of spring: a new beginning, a clean slate and fresh perspectives, an occasion when all differences, political and otherwise, are put aside and people celebrate as a community.

On Saturday, I attended another Norouz, this time with Hamilton's vibrant Kurdish community.

Also on Saturday, I sat down with a group of people to discuss particular concerns arising from within our diverse communities. The issue that keeps coming up is foreign-trained professionals being unable to work in the fields for which they were trained, accredited and educated in another country. That ever-elusive requirement of Canadian experience continues to be a barrier for well-educated and highly skilled people who immigrate to Ontario. Many I speak to believe that employers use Canadian experience as a cloak to veil their discriminatory and unfair hiring practices. They tell me it is far easier for them to be hired in their chosen field in the United States and elsewhere, even the country they left in search of a better life.

This is a disturbing thing to hear. Starting with funding for small ethnocultural groups in Hamilton who are bridges for helping newcomers, this government needs to look at the effects on youth, particularly, to adjust to a new culture.

RENEWABLE FUELS

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): Today I am pleased to recognize a business in my riding. I was proud to attend UPI Energy's launch of its first E85 gas station in Guelph. UPI plans to launch a second E85 facility in Chatham later this year. Both gas stations are full service and are open to the public seven days a week.

UPI's E85 is a high-octane gasoline which contains up to 85% ethanol. E85's ethanol content is seasonally adjusted and it's made from ethanol produced right here in Ontario.

E85 benefits the environment by lowering vehicle carbon monoxide emissions, generating less carbon dioxide discharge and releasing fewer volatile organic compounds and particulate matter than conventional gasolines. What does all that mean? A reduction in the pollutants that contribute to smog, haze and acid rain.

UPI's E85 is safe to use in all flex-fuel vehicles. Several auto manufacturers produce vehicles that can run on any combination of ethanol and gasoline up to a maxi-

mum 85% ethanol content. The flex-fuel vehicles tend to be larger sedans and pickup trucks. They are a good solution for big families and people who have lots of stuff to haul but who also want to be environmentally responsible.

Unfortunately, the new federal auto tax rules penalize people who buy flex-fuel cars. It's important to educate the public and the federal government that E85 fuel is an exciting new option and it's available in Guelph.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): Water quality in rural Ottawa is rapidly reaching crisis levels and there is no support from the McGuinty Liberals to improve this crumbling infrastructure.

One day after the McGuinty budget was tabled, I met with disillusioned residents from my riding in Lynwood Trailer Park with Ottawa city Councillor Doug Thompson, just minutes from Ottawa South, Dalton McGuinty's constituency. What they told me and what they showed me was utterly disturbing. The water sample would turn your stomach. It was brown; the size of the particles suspended in the water was beyond belief. They described health problems as a result of the poor water quality. They described how they can't even wash their clothes because the water stains the fabric. They showed me pictures of overflowing septic tanks.

The Minister of the Environment says this water is drinkable, but let me read a quote from the Lynwood residents that was received a day after this budget was tabled: "This, in the Premier's hometown of Ottawa, where we pay Ottawa's mill rate for property tax, have dirt roads, no storm sewers, resulting in flooding of lawns and driveways, no street lights, poor dial-up Internet, no cable service and no drinkable water," Minister of Health Promotion.

These are Third World conditions and they should not be tolerated in Ontario, especially in the national capital.

The recent budget handed down by this Liberal government has no plans to fix crumbling infrastructure in rural Ottawa. It is shameful and, quite frankly, rural residents in Ottawa deserve better than a rudderless McGuinty ship.

TRANSIT SERVICES

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): For years I have been advocating on behalf of my constituents to have the Spadina-York subway extended to York University and beyond into Thornhill.

It was over seven years ago that I founded the Spadina-York subway extension committee when I was a councillor in the city of Vaughan. Through this committee, I worked tirelessly along with my colleagues from Vaughan and the region of York and from the city of Barrie, the city of Brampton, the city of Toronto and York University to ensure that one day our vision of

having the subway would become a reality. Finally, it has happened.

There are many benefits of having a subway in Thornhill. The subway will ease traffic congestion, provide an affordable and efficient alternative for commuters and promote growth for local business and taxpayers.

I would like to thank my fellow colleagues in the McGuinty government for recognizing the significance of this project by committing funds towards the extension over a year ago. I would also like to thank Councillor Sandra Yeung Racco, the current chair of the Spadina-York subway extension committee, who has been a passionate and effective advocate for the subway extension.

Of course, the subway extension will revolutionize public transportation in the region of York. I again want to say thank you to the McGuinty government for making that a reality.

1340

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): During the course of public discussion surrounding the lottery corporation scandal, the minister responsible for OLG and his boss, Premier McGuinty, have consistently used the defence that OLG is an arm's-length agency, that government doesn't get involved in its operations. The lie was put to that claim last week when the Toronto Sun revealed that top Liberal strategists Warren Kinsella and Jim Warren had met to devise ways to discredit the report by CBC's Fifth Estate and, indirectly, the ripped-off ticket purchaser, Bob Edmonds, who, sadly, passed away yesterday. The Liberal effort at misdirection was further revealed yesterday when we found out that the head of the Liberal re-election team and former chief of staff to Premier McGuinty, Don Guy, also attended this spin meeting.

The Premier, Minister Caplan and other Liberal apologists are treating Ontarians with disdain when they justify their failure to protect lottery ticket purchasers in this province by telling them they have nothing to do with OLG operations, while at the same time their top election officials are calling the shots, more interested in protecting political hides than in the protection of trusting Ontarians. So much for arm's length: They cut off the arm when it's convenient.

This is nothing short of shameful conduct by the McGuinty government. The minister needs to resign and an independent investigator has to be called in.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): Yesterday I had the opportunity to host the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Honourable Chris Bentley, for two announcements at the Bruce Power training centre that will help to provide greater access to post-secondary education for the residents of Huron–Bruce. In

what is great news for the community's largest employer, Bruce Power and the Power Workers' Union Training Inc. are training up to 25 industrial millwright mechanic co-op apprentices from Fanshawe College's mechanical technician diploma program. The minister was on hand to announce that this government will be funding the program with a \$400,000 investment in the college. This co-op diploma apprenticeship program will combine a college diploma with apprenticeship training, which will add flexibility to the apprenticeship system and respond to the needs of employers while attracting more youth to the skilled trades.

Minister Bentley also announced Kincardine's new distance education access centre which, under the Contact South program, is being supported by a \$2.2-million investment in 2007 to implement the new network in five small or rural Ontario communities. This new program will provide students in rural areas with better access to post-secondary education, with a focus on co-operative education, apprenticeships and trades training.

These two announcements are absolutely prime examples of how the McGuinty government is putting opportunities for post-secondary education and training right at the fingertips of our youth.

ONTARIO TRAILS

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): It's a pleasure to rise today to support and proclaim the recent \$2-million grant that has been awarded to the riding of Brant to connect its trail and bikeway system that had previously been cut in half by Highway 403. This wonderful grant further demonstrates the McGuinty government's commitment to improve infrastructure in the riding of Brant and indeed the province of Ontario, as the money will help the city of Brantford build a safe road for pedestrians and cyclists over Highway 403 at the Wayne Gretzky Parkway.

But the benefits do not end there, as this project is expected to create as many as 300 jobs for people in Ontario, and it will also help to promote healthy living by providing the people of Brant with yet another opportunity to get out there and get active and get walking. When the Brantford trail integration project is completed, we can also expect to see an upsurge in our growing ecotourism industry, as the improved trail system will undoubtedly attract visitors from all over Ontario.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of Mr. Bob Scott, chairman of the trails and bikeways committee, and Mary Welsh, who have both tirelessly advocated for the improvements to the trail system throughout the riding and indeed the province of Ontario.

Thanks to the investments made by the McGuinty government, the citizens of Brant will soon enjoy the trail system that inspires many people and their families to get out to walk and stay active and get fit. And I don't take mints because I'm always ready to speak when I'm asked to.

ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): Last week, the member from Whitby-Ajax said, "I think most Ontarians would feel that we're not seeing better performance and service." I want to take this opportunity to highlight steps taken by the McGuinty government to modernize and restore the delivery of key services to Ontarians.

Before, Ontarians were waiting nearly 18 to 20 weeks for regular certificates. Now we're delivering birth, marriage and death certificates, from desktop to doorstep, in 15 days or it's free. This is the first public service guarantee of its kind in North America.

Not only has our government reformed service delivery, we've restored stability to vital services after more than eight years of deep Tory cuts. We've added food safety and meat inspectors, safe drinking water and nutrient management staff, social assistance workers and workplace safety inspectors. The McGuinty government is strengthening services to Ontarians by strengthening the public service.

We all recall the Auditor General's 2002 report blasting the Tory government for wasting taxpayer dollars on expensive consultants. In fact, the Tories spent \$1 billion on consultants. The McGuinty government initiated a consultant conversion strategy to bring work done by—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

WEARING OF FLOWERS

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like consent from the House to be able to wear the daffodil that was provided to members from the Canadian Cancer Society. The month of April is cancer fundraising month and the daffodil is in recognition of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Craiton has asked for unanimous consent to wear the daffodil denoting April as Cancer Awareness Month. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT (PUBLIC TRANSIT EXPENSE TAX CREDIT), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI DE L'IMPÔT SUR LE REVENU (CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR DÉPENSES DE TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 196, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act to provide for a tax credit for expenses incurred in using public transit / Projet de loi 196, Loi modifiant la Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu afin de prévoir un crédit d'impôt

pour les dépenses engagées au titre des transports en commun.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'd first like to thank a fourth-year Ohio university intern student, Tsa Alexander, who has helped in the construction of this bill. Bill 137 was introduced in the last session and was heard before the estimates committee.

Transit is an important option for commuters and people frustrated with gridlock. Two years ago, as I said, I introduced the bill, and the federal government actually—Minister Flaherty and Prime Minister Stephen Harper—adopted the idea, which would seem to endorse it. Today's bill harmonizes the federal and provincial entitlements.

For the people who use transit today, the average commuter spends about \$100 a week. That's \$5,000 a year, and for a family that could be \$10,000 a year. I'm asking for a little support from the minister and from the Premier for the hard-working people of Ontario.

SAFEGUARDING AND SUSTAINING ONTARIO'S WATER ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LA SAUVEGARDE ET LA DURABILITÉ DES EAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. Broten moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 198, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario's water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act / *Projet de loi 198, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario afin d'assurer la sauvegarde et la durabilité des eaux de l'Ontario, à apporter des modifications connexes à la Loi de 2002 sur la salubrité de l'eau potable et à abroger la Loi sur le contrôle des transferts d'eau.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'll speak during ministerial statements. Thank you.

SALE OF VQA WINE AND ONTARIO MICROBREWERY BEER AT CONVENIENCE STORES ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LA VENTE DE VIN DE LA VQA ET DE BIÈRE DE MICROBRASSERIE ONTARIENNE DANS LES DÉPANNEURS

Mr. Craiton moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 199, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act to permit the sale of VQA wine and Ontario microbrewery beer at convenience stores / *Projet de loi 199, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les alcools afin de permettre la vente*

de vin de la VQA et de bière de microbrasserie ontarienne dans les dépanneurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1352 to 1357.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Ramal, Khalil
Arthurs, Wayne	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Barrett, Toby	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Bentley, Christopher	MacLeod, Lisa	Sandals, Liz
Bradley, James J.	Marsales, Judy	Savoline, Joyce
Broten, Laurel C.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Scott, Laurie
Cansfield, Donna H.	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Chan, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Tascona, Joseph N.
Craiton, Kim	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dombrowsky, Leona	Murdoch, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	O'Toole, John	Yakubski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard	
Hardeman, Ernie	Racco, Mario G.	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Parsons, Ernie
Ferreira, Paul	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Horwath, Andrea	Martel, Shelley	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 52; the nays are 8.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): The intent of this bill is to help grape growers and wine growers not only of my riding but across Ontario. In my riding, the second-largest industry is the grape growing and wine industry. The bill promotes the excellent concept that consumers should buy Ontario's 100% grown products, like our VQA grapes, peaches, pears, apricots and apples.

The bill is very simple. It amends the Liquor Control Act to allow the LCBO to permit convenience stores to sell 100% domestically grown VQA wines—that's all Ontario wine in the bottle—and microbrewery beers from Ontario, much in the same way as established agency stores sell throughout rural areas of the province. The legislation also provides for an enhanced Smart Serve training component, which will benefit the province and consumers.

It's a unique bill whose intent is simply to assist and promote buy Ontario and support our grape growers and wine industry here in Ontario.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WATER PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

PROTECTION ET CONSERVATION DE L'EAU

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): It is an honour to stand before this House today to announce, in conjunction with my colleague Minister Ramsay, legislation of great significance to every Ontarian. If passed, this legislation would conserve and protect our water for future generations. It would reinforce environmental standards and secure our province's water resources. In brief, it would prove our government's abiding commitment to protecting the water of this great province.

Today, we introduced the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act, 2007. This bill would make the terms of the historic Great Lakes agreement the law. At the same time, it would also, for the first time in Ontario, allow the government to require commercial and industrial users of water to pay for the water they use. Keeping our water clean and plentiful is crucial to our health, our growth and our prosperity for the present and for generations to come.

Three out of every four Ontarians get their drinking water from the Great Lakes basin. In fact, water protection is a mandate and a hallmark of our government. Two years ago, we introduced the Clean Water Act, unprecedented legislation that sets, above all else, prevention as the first principle in water protection. That legislation empowers local communities to manage their own sources of drinking water. In 2006, that act became law.

Over the next few months, we will endeavour to renew the Canada-Ontario agreement, a blueprint for protecting the Great Lakes, their waters and their ecosystem. The signing of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement has given us a new opportunity to take decisive action to protect and preserve our water resources. But even before signing the Great Lakes agreement, Ontario was a leader in protecting and conserving these waters. Our laws met or even exceeded many of the requirements of the Great Lakes agreement.

La signature de l'entente sur les ressources en eaux durables du bassin des Grands Lacs et du Saint Laurent nous ont donné une nouvelle occasion de prendre des mesures décisives afin de protéger et de préserver nos ressources en eau. Même avant de signer l'entente des Grands Lacs, l'Ontario jouait un rôle prédominant dans la protection et la conservation de ces bassins hydrographiques. Nos lois satisfaisaient et parfois dépassaient plusieurs exigences de l'entente des Grands Lacs.

We knew that we needed to do more to protect and sustain these shared waters. We had to work with our neighbours across our borders and put into place the

same kind of rigorous water conservation standards in each state and province across the Great Lakes.

Our water is a precious resource, and today we are taking the next logical step. Water conservation charges are an integral element of this new act. These charges reflect our conviction. We take our stewardship of our environment seriously. We believe that the businesses that benefit from using the province's water resources should contribute their fair share towards the cost of managing it. So we proposed, for the first time, that commercial and industrial users pay a charge for the water that they take.

From the beginning, this government has made protecting and conserving our water supplies a priority. With this new legislation, we can build on the success made possible by the Clean Water Act and further strengthen protections already in place for the Great Lakes basin and our other waters. By doing so, we are helping to build stronger and healthier communities for all people of Ontario. I'm proud to be a member of the McGuinty government—a green government. I'm proud to act on behalf of the Premier as the steward of the province's environment, and I'm proud to sponsor this legislation that is so critical to our sustainable future and our economy. That is a legacy I believe we can all be proud of.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): It was 16 months ago that I was proud to stand in the House to inform the members that Premier McGuinty had just signed an historic agreement with the province of Quebec and the eight Great Lakes states to strengthen protection for the waters of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.

Il y a 16 mois, j'ai été fier d'annoncer ici même que le premier ministre McGuinty venait de signer l'entente historique avec la province de Québec et huit États américains du bassin des Grands Lacs visant à renforcer les mesures de protection des eaux du bassin des Grands Lacs et du Saint-Laurent.

Today I'm equally proud that Minister Broten and I inform the members that Ontario is taking the next major step forward in conserving and protecting Great Lakes waters by introducing legislation to implement the terms of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. Through this proposed legislation, we are taking the next step to conserve and protect the waters of the Great Lakes basin and all our water resources for the long-term environmental, social and economic well-being of Ontario.

In negotiating the agreement, Ontario fought hard for all of our Great Lakes jurisdictions to agree to adopt equally strong laws.

Nous voulions que ces ressources partagées soient protégées à l'échelle des bassins versants. Et nous avons réussi.

We wanted basin-wide protection for this shared resource, and we succeeded. We achieved a virtual ban on diversions of our water out of the Great Lakes basin. We agreed to strengthen conservation measures and basin-wide environmental standards. We agreed to in-

crease the role of science in decision-making and achieved a new commitment enabling dialogue and input of First Nations. We also set a high environmental standard across the basin and created a regional body to oversee water uses made up of representatives from the 10 provinces and states.

Premier McGuinty is the chair of the regional body for 2007, and implementing the Great Lakes agreement during Ontario's term as chair would be a strong and timely demonstration that this province is determined to protect its water resources and its environment.

The amendments we are proposing to the Ontario Water Resources Act include several critical advances in protecting Great Lakes basin waters. Ontario's existing ban on diversions of water out of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin and other water basins in the province—which is now a regulation—would be placed in legislation.

We would also prohibit new or increased transfers of water from one Great Lakes watershed to another unless strictly regulated criteria are met.

We would create the authority to pass regulations to further support our commitments under the agreement, such as requiring measures to promote water conservation, introducing new environmental standards for water takings in the basin and responding to cumulative impacts on the Great Lakes and the threats of climate change.

Finally, we would allow Quebec and the eight Great Lakes states to appeal to the Environmental Review Tribunal or seek judicial review of decisions by Ontario regarding water withdrawals and transfers from one Great Lakes watershed to another. However, this measure would only come into effect if the other jurisdictions provided Ontario with similar access to their own courts, enabling us to intervene in decisions outside Ontario that may affect the Great Lakes basin waters.

1410

Throughout the process of negotiating the Great Lakes agreement and developing this proposed legislation, we have been diligent in involving stakeholders, First Nations and the public. Their input helped Ontario seek stronger protection of the Great Lakes basin in our negotiations, and it remains vital to our implementation of the agreement.

All those we have consulted are well aware that we continue to face enormous challenges as we move forward to fulfill the terms of the Great Lakes agreement. Climate change is upon us, promising unpredictable shifts in temperature and weather. In the United States, more people are moving to dry southwestern states. Meanwhile, the global population continues to grow, increasing the demand for water worldwide. That's why it's vital that we take every opportunity to conserve and protect our shared waters and encourage our neighbours to do the same.

Today the most compelling action we can take on both counts is to pass the proposed legislation; by doing so, we would help ensure that Ontario will continue to con-

serve and protect a precious resource and build a stronger, healthier, more prosperous future for all our citizens, our environment and our economy.

CHILD SAFETY

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I rise in the House today to talk about an issue that is important to all Ontarians and that touches the lives of all Ontarians, and that's the safety of our children.

I'd like to acknowledge, first and foremost, our colleague Ernie Parsons, whose efforts to ensure our children's safety have been instrumental in getting us to where we are today.

I am especially honoured to acknowledge the efforts of the Jelley family. Eve Jelley and her dad, Richard Robertson, are here today in the gallery. They have worked tirelessly to protect the 800,000 students who regularly use school buses in Ontario every day. Mrs. Jelley's son Brandon died in a fatal accident with a school bus, and for a number of years she has worked diligently to ensure that tragedy would never happen to another child, and I am especially pleased to be able to say that I worked with the Jelley family, with this government and with Mr. Parsons to ensure that that does not happen again.

Protecting the safety of our children, when they're traveling on a school bus and in other aspects of their lives, is something that we as a government take very seriously. That's why I'm so pleased to announce that we're investing \$2 million to keep children safe, by helping to pay for the retrofitting of any school buses built before January 2005 that are not already equipped with a crossing arm. The funding will also be made available to school bus operators who added a crossing arm at their own expense.

By January of next year, every school bus in Ontario will have a crossing arm; no exceptions. This requirement is the result of our government's strong commitment to improving school bus safety in Ontario.

Since taking office, our government has made sure that the owner of any vehicle that illegally passes a school bus faces charges regardless of who was driving at the time; we've increased the fines for speeding and have added three demerit points for those who endanger pedestrians at crossings; and our government required every new school bus built after January 2005 to be equipped with more safety features.

Despite the actions we've taken to improve Ontario's excellent school bus safety record, we realized that more needed to be done. Without these changes, it could take up to 10 years to equip all school buses with this safety feature, and we simply cannot wait any longer. That's why we're helping to pay for this retrofit, and that's why we're making crossing arms a requirement next January. This will make the school bus, already the safest vehicle on the road, even safer. We're doing this to safeguard our most important asset: Ontario's children.

I'd like to acknowledge the Ontario School Bus Association, the owners and the drivers who work very diligently every day to ensure that those 800,000 children get to and from school. Remember, it's their first point of contact at the beginning of the day and their last point at the end of the day. So the relationship they have with that school bus driver is so important, and believe me, they are second to none when it comes to ensuring that our children are well cared for.

I would like to acknowledge their work and their efforts, along with the Jelley family and Mr. Parsons, in working together collaboratively with this government to know that we are making a difference. This is the kind of thing where, regardless of where you sit in the House, you have to be really proud to be an Ontarian today, because you know that with just a little bit of effort, you've made a whole lot of difference.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

WATER PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of the Environment on behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus and to say we fully support the protection of our Great Lakes and other bodies of water in this province. It's vital that we do that in order to provide our children and our grandchildren with a clean and safe environment.

I do have to hand it, though, to Dalton McGuinty and his ministers, because they know how to put on a show. As per usual, we saw the Minister of the Environment patting herself and her colleagues on the back, almost as if to say, "Hey, we fooled them again."

Interjection.

Ms. Scott: That's right. In 2003, four years ago, Dalton McGuinty stated in that famous red book, in that promise-breaking ink, "We will stop allowing companies to raid our precious water supplies.... We will end this reckless giveaway."

Let's consider this. We are now in 2007, with the first implementation of today's grandly announced legislation to take place in 2009. Only in Dalton McGuinty's world can a broken promise be excused by an extended date. This is just one more example of saying anything to get elected. We are now only a few months away from an election, so he is kicking this out the door with as much fanfare as the Minister of the Environment can muster in such a short period of time. They did nothing for four years, and now they are pushing this out the door to hide the fact that Dalton McGuinty's environmental rhetoric is just that: It's rhetoric, broken promises, saying anything to get elected. These—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I really do need to be able to hear the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock respond. We need all members to provide the courtesy that needs to be shown to the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

Ms. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These water-taking rules won't come into effect until 2009, six years after the 2003 election promises you made. And it goes further than that. Once again, the minister has a profound photo op on legislation where consultation and regulations are yet to be determined. The actual backgrounder that you handed out today says, "This is the first of several steps required...." Nearly four years into your mandate, you've finally taken the first steps. There's no commitment by Dalton McGuinty on meeting his promises. What this amounts to, in usual Liberal fashion, is feel-good electioneering.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I would like to respond to the Ministry of Natural Resources part of the statement today. This proposed bill implements terms of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. That's the agreement between the eight states surrounding the Great Lakes, Quebec and Ontario.

It's important to ban diversions of water out of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. It's also important to restrict transfers of water from one Great Lakes watershed to another. I would certainly also like to point out that it's very important for my personal riding, the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, where I've had the opportunity to go out each year and meet with the Georgian Bay Association. I would certainly like to give them a lot of credit for the work they've done having to do with water levels in particular. In fact, I believe Mary Muter, representing the Georgian Bay Association, is here at Queen's Park today. The Georgian Bay Association has spent a lot of their own money doing studies on the drain of Lake Huron. They financed the Baird report, pointing out the work that needs to be done to slow down the flow of water out of Lake Huron. I would like to recognize all that good work that the Georgian Bay Association has done and how important water quality and quantity are to all of us in the Great Lakes area.

1420

CHILD SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I also, on behalf of John Tory and the official opposition, would like to express our thanks to Eve Jelley and her family for their advocacy in making our children on school buses safer. It should be recalled that it was our government that introduced the community safety zones and school safety zones where fines were doubled. There was a lot of work done there. I commend the minister for slowly and slightly moving it forward.

However, she said in her remarks that there is certainly more to be done on this topic. If you look at the school bus issue and the challenges before the operators and the drivers, who transport 800,000 children per day, they're inadequately funded, and the Minister of Education knows this. This is a chronic problem with your government of promising one thing and doing another.

So I'm a little bit disappointed when I look at the pressure that you're putting on those operators who transport our children safely each day, and not having enough money to do so adequately. I think you owe the association an apology, quite frankly, for forcing this with inadequate funding once again.

Minister, we're prepared to support this. We, along with you, have always had first in our minds the protection and safe delivery of our children in the school system.

I want to also remind the members that it was our government that worked with the school bus association to look at issues substantive to children's safety in school buses.

WATER PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): It's not quite a pleasure or an honour but my duty today to talk about the new act that has been put forward by the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Natural Resources.

As has been said, climate change is going to change the water resources in this province. We already face challenges with quantity and quality, but as the interior of the continent dries out, as Ontario dries out, we are going to face huge demands for water and we're going to face huge demands for high-quality water. This act does not deal with many key elements that have to be dealt with to protect our water.

We are one of the few jurisdictions that can transfer water from one watershed, from one basin to another within its own jurisdiction. That is something that should be controlled, should be taken care of. But in this legislation, the ability to move water from the Georgian Bay-Lake Huron basin to the Lake Ontario basin is not dealt with in the way that it has to be dealt with. It is not dealt with.

The simple reality is that the big pipe, which should have gone through a full environmental assessment, is continuing on. It is going up to Sharon, it's going up to Holland Landing. That pipe in its construction is draining aquifers, springs and creeks. That pipe is going to affect the amount of water available in Georgian Bay and Lake Huron. Those bodies of water are already threatened through climate change with drops in water levels. This bill is going to provide, at best, weak-kneed protection. And frankly, I don't think it's going to get that far.

One of the difficulties we have is that there are other jurisdictions—New Berlin in Wisconsin—that want to get around interbasin transfers, and they'll look at what Ontario is doing and say to their own state jurisdiction, "Well, Ontario is doing it. We want the same consideration here."

The other concern here—and it's been alluded to by the official opposition, alluded to quite well—is the whole question of water-taking fees. In 2003, Dalton McGuinty made very strong, very impassioned state-

ments about the need to charge for our water—four years ago, 2003. Since that time, the New Democrats have been pressing this government to bring forward legislation on water-taking fees. We need fees based on volume taken to protect the quantity of water that's out there and we need that money to fund water protection/source protection activity.

What we get today is a shell. We are told that there will be regulations that will come along sometime. We are not told what the thresholds are. We are not told how this will be executed. We did, at a press conference this morning, get told that, by 2009, some will be paying for water. That's extraordinary: 2009, in power for four years.

We went through this debate during the Clean Water Act. There was an opportunity well over a year ago to bring forward water-taking fees and provide the funding necessary to deal with water quality and water quantity problems in this province. We didn't get it then, and what we have now is a shell.

The Premier spoke to this this morning. There's no question there's an election coming. There's a promise—let's call it broken—on the table, waiting around. He doesn't want to get clobbered with another broken promise hit and so we get this brought forward in the last few months of his term, when he could have acted years ago. It's extraordinary that this government, which opposed putting water conservation requirements in the Clean Water Act, now, in this act, is talking about charges for water conservation. There is no consistency other than to make this issue go away, deal with any political heat that has to be dealt with, but in the end actually not come to grips with it. This government has not acted well to protect the environment and today is another day of the same.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Yesterday you made a ruling in the House. When the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal was answering a question, you said the minister would know that you need to refer to members by their riding names and not their proper names. I have heard that abused several times yesterday and today. I guess we're all prepared to live by whatever ruling is there for all of us, but I think we have to live by a ruling. Either we're allowed to call each other by the proper names or we're not, but I don't think we can have it both ways. I know you've tried to have some flexibility there.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I'm sorry there are some interjections over there from people. I didn't want to call Mr. Bisson by his name. I always refer to him by his riding, so that's what I was concerned about. Which will it be?

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The Government House Leader has a point of order. It is always

out of order to use members' proper names in this place. You need to refer to members and ministers by their titles or by their ridings.

VISITORS

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I rise to draw attention to a generational hat trick here in the Legislative Assembly today. Not only do we have the distinguished page from the great riding of Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot, Hayley Levine, here serving us so well, but we also have her father, Dr. Mitchell Levine, here today, as well as her grandmother, Beatrice Levine. Welcome to you.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce my younger sister, Anne Schenkel, who's come down from Ottawa to check up on her older brother.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier, and I want to begin by joining in some comments that the Premier made this morning and noting with sadness the passing of Mr. Bob Edmonds. He was a man, as the Premier noted, who stood up for what he believed in and someone from whom I think everybody can take inspiration. I think we all send our condolences to his family.

My question for the Premier is this. Yesterday, you had three opportunities to confirm something that we knew then and we now know is true, specifically that Don Guy, your former chief of staff and your current lead campaign strategist, participated in a number of meetings with the lottery corporation concerning the lottery scandal. Given that it's true, why would you not have simply confirmed this yesterday on one of the occasions on which you were asked whether or not he attended those meetings?

1430

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): After that particular program was aired on TV on the Fifth Estate, I would certainly have hoped and expected that someone at the OLG would insist on convening a number of meetings in order to determine the very best way to respond to those allegations, which subsequently proved, to a very large extent, to be substantiated. So it is not any surprise to me that the OLG convened a number of meetings. I don't know when they convened these meetings, I don't know who they convened them with, but I would certainly place a very heavy responsibility on them to do just that.

What I think is really important to Ontarians is what came from those meetings. First of all, the OLG itself put

forward a seven-point action plan. Beyond that, the Ombudsman himself specifically looked at this matter, and he came forward with a number of recommendations. We intend to adopt each and every one of those recommendations.

Mr. Tory: Actually, the facts show that what came from those meetings was an attempt to spin a story that said that the real reason the insiders were winning more often was because they were buying tickets more often. There's absolutely uncontradicted evidence to the effect that that's what those meetings produced, that some series of studies—that instead of massive fraud ripping people off for their money, what was going on here was just a simple pattern of people buying more tickets and winning more often.

The Premier himself has said that people are buying a dream when they buy these tickets. They expect that the system's going to be fair and trustworthy, and they expect that you will take those interests to heart and deal with those problems when you find out about them—to fix them, as opposed to people trying to cover them up.

We now know that more and more of your top aides—whether they're directly from your campaign organization or people who used to be in your office or people connected to you in one way or another—were involved in concocting this original story. Will the Premier tell us who it was from your team of spin doctors that told Wilson Lee, a member of the minister's staff, that your office thought there was nothing to this story of insider wins and that the CBC story ought to be treated only as a communications issue? Who did that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: If the leader of the official opposition would do so, I think he would find it very instructive to actually read the Ombudsman's report. Beginning on page 25, he talks about the outcome of a number of meetings. He walks through the various statisticians and professors hired to look at how often retailers should be winning. He hired his own expert consultant, who concluded that the Fifth Estate based its conclusions on what he called unreliable data. That's in his own report. And he recommended that the OLG keep track of what an insider is and the number of times insiders win, and that's exactly what the OLG is going to do.

The Ombudsman also talks about the seven-point trust and security action plan which came out of those meetings, beginning on page 34 of this report. He says specifically, on page 50: "The OLG deserves some credit for finally taking some decisive action to address the fallout from the Fifth Estate...." But of course the Ombudsman went further—significantly further—with some very specific recommendations. Those serve the public interest, and that is why we will act on them.

Mr. Tory: I would start closer to the beginning, on page 2, where the Ombudsman says, "In the immediate aftermath of the CBC program, the OLG responded by trying to downplay its revelations." That's what he said on page 2. That represents the activities of your campaign strategists and spin doctors to try to downplay the revelations that the Fifth Estate came up with. That is the

problem here, because people just won't come clean on this issue.

We've been informed that a meeting was held in late August 2006. Remember now that nobody anywhere in your government knew anything about this until October—nobody. Nobody asked, nobody knew anything. We've been told that there was a meeting in August 2006 at which Wilson Lee, the current chief of staff to the minister—who should have resigned by now—is reported to have said that the Premier's office thought there was nothing to this lottery scandal and that it should be treated as a communications problem.

Every single time we've come with information from people who are afraid to come forward because you won't appoint an investigation independently, it's turned out to be true. There was no plan to investigate here. Do you think this was an appropriate way for your office to handle this matter, to say that it's just a communications problem and that people should just forget about it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I'm always interested in the partisan perspective brought by my friend opposite, but I think Ontarians would like to hear what the Ombudsman said about our response to this. He says, "This is the kind of support and commitment on behalf of government which is essential if we are to move forward to restore integrity and trust in the lottery system." He then added, "I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change."

The Ombudsman has done an excellent job. He has come up with some very solid recommendations. Each and every one of those recommendations speaks to what is, in fact, the public interest, and that is exactly why we will uphold each and every one of those recommendations by moving forward on them.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. Tory: My question again is to the Premier. It's no wonder that people are outraged. Quoting again from page 2 of the Ombudsman's report, right up front, "In the immediate aftermath of the CBC program, the OLG responded by trying to downplay its revelations."

You talk about partisanship. It wasn't my campaign manager who was giving advice to the OLG. It wasn't a person who is one of our spin doctors who was over there doing that. It was your people who were giving this advice described by the Ombudsman, saying they tried to downplay the revelations. The response of your government at every turn has been to duck and try to evade the questions. Yesterday it was Don Guy's involvement; today it's a meeting that Wilson Lee was at. Long before the story broke, you have seen this throughout as nothing more than a small communications issue when people's money was being stolen. The lottery buying public don't want to be spun. They just want to know they've got a fair chance.

It's becoming clear each and every day that what we need here to get to the bottom of this is a non-partisan,

independent, objective examination of matters that haven't yet been looked at. Why won't you do the right thing and appoint such an investigation right now and get on with it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I gather that suddenly the leader of the official opposition has lost faith in the ability of the Ombudsman to conduct an impartial, objective, arm's-length assessment of what has happened here. Beyond that, apparently he has also lost faith in the Ontario Provincial Police, to whom we have referred this matter. If we take what is under the table out from there and put it on top of the table, it seems perfectly obvious to me that the leader of the official opposition is pursuing this matter purely for partisan political interests.

This matter was brought to a legislative standing committee in September 2006. Tory members were there at that time. They did not raise a single question related to this matter or to Mr. Edmonds, even though they chaired the committee. They had ample opportunity in the past to do so. They refused to bring this matter forward.

Mr. Tory: You know, Mr. Speaker, that is such incredible revisionist history. The fact is that the Conservative members of that committee asked for more time to investigate this matter and your people, the Liberal members, shut that committee down before it finished its work.

Hershell Ezrin said it last night on the TVOntario program the Agenda. He said the standard is set by the boss, and he's right about that. At the end of the day, what we have here are e-mails to the minister's office, meetings in the middle of the summer at which orders are given to treat it as nothing more than a communications problem, your top spin masters having meetings on a Sunday night. They have meetings all the time on a Sunday night on a non-partisan basis to deal with this.

Ultimately, you've got a situation here: The Ombudsman is not investigating your office or the minister's office, the OPP is not investigating and can't investigate your office and the minister's office. That's why we need someone independent to investigate these things others can't investigate. Why won't you simply do the right thing? What are you trying to hide? Appoint an independent investigation if you have nothing to hide and let them look at your office and the minister's office.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of official opposition is spending so much time these days being outraged that there's a very real danger he's about to become outrageous. He may want to give that some thought as he contemplates his role in this House.

We've had the Ombudsman look at this now. Beyond that—

Interjections.

1440

The Speaker: Order. We can wait. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It may not satisfy the leader of the official opposition, but that's not our purpose on this

side of the House. Our purpose is to uphold the greater public interest. Our purpose is the definition of that as well.

The Ombudsman has reviewed this matter in some real detail. He has come forward with a number of recommendations. We intend to act on each and every one of those recommendations. Some of those were directed to us in our capacity as the government; others were directed to the OLG. Beyond that, the OLG also moved forward prior to the Ombudsman's report with its own seven-point action plan. We think that is also worthy and upholds the public interest.

I think it's also noteworthy to understand that—I think we should ask ourselves, “What has happened to ticket sales?” If Ontarians have had their confidence shattered as a result of this issue, what has happened to ticket sales? The fact of the matter is, they've actually gone up.

Mr. Tory: Now the Premier is taking credit for increased ticket sales. Earth to Premier: Any time the jackpot goes up, the ticket sales go up.

The problem the Premier has here is that he is confusing the public interest with his own partisan interest. That's why he sent his campaign manager and assorted other people from his party over. But the fact is, the Ombudsman's report shows that a woman, for example, walked away, it seems, with \$12.5 million of money the Ombudsman concludes she doesn't have. This is about real people buying a dream—real people. What they want and what they need in order to satisfy them that they can keep buying the tickets is an independent investigation.

As Hershell Ezrin says, the standard is set by the boss. So we're asking the boss, namely the Premier: Since the Ombudsman can't look into your office and the minister's office, and the OPP can't, why wouldn't you let someone independent look into those things and get to the bottom of this?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Just recently, we had the good fortune and the privilege to present on behalf of the people of Ontario a budget which accounted for over \$90 billion in expenditures. You would think that the leader of the official opposition might have some passing interest in that document.

I think the grandest revelation we've experienced in this House in the last couple of weeks is that the leader of the official opposition is desperate not to talk about anything found within that budget. He doesn't want to talk about the fact that we're going to help 1.3 million children with our new Ontario child benefit. He doesn't want to talk about the fact that we're lowering taxes for businesses in the province of Ontario. He doesn't want to talk about GTA pooling, the fact that we're going to get rid of that. He doesn't want to talk about the fact that we've found the actual capacity to balance the budget after his party left us a \$5.6-billion deficit.

Maybe it's not surprising he doesn't want to talk about any of those things, because, when he was asked to name one initiative in our budget that he would reverse, he said, “I can't think of one.”

The Speaker: New question. The member for York South–Weston.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): When it comes to Lottogate, Premier, people know that Warren Kinsella and Jim Warren are the dynamic duo of the Premier's damage control team. This morning, the Premier confirmed that in fact it's the three amigos—that Don Guy, his election campaign chair, is part of the cabal that worked to sweep the \$100-million lottery rip-off under the carpet.

If you have nothing to hide, if your fingerprints aren't all over this cover-up, direct the OLG to release minutes of the spinmeister meetings so that we can all get the facts. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I can understand why the NDP don't want to talk about our budget either. They're very, very uncomfortable with our new Ontario child benefit. It's going to cost \$2.1 billion over five years. It's going to benefit 1.3 million of our poorest children. They're very uncomfortable with the fact that we are about to increase, over three years, benefits for injured workers—very uncomfortable with that. They are very uncomfortable with the fact that we're going to increase the minimum wage for our lowest-income workers in the province of Ontario, and they're not happy with the fact that we're going to increase the property tax credit for Ontario's seniors. So I can see why it is that they have no interest whatsoever in talking about a budget that's been very well—

Interjection.

The Speaker: I need the member for Niagara Centre to withdraw that last remark.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Withdrawn.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr. Ferreira: Just like his budget, the Premier answers questions with a five-year rollout.

Premier, you've been busted, and your culture of cover-up is now over. When the scandal of what happened to Robert Edmonds hit the airwaves, your Liberal three amigos sat down at OLG headquarters. The Ombudsman described their scheming like this:

“As soon as the ‘insider ...’ scandal was exposed, the OLG took action—but instead of investigating what went wrong ... it reacted like a business facing a public relations nightmare. It hired experts to dispute the CBC's findings, even though, as our investigators discovered, it knew full well that Mr. Edmonds was far from alone.”

Is the Ombudsman mistaken? Will you tell us, Premier? Or are you willing to admit that three of your trusted insiders were engaged in a cover-up?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Ombudsman's report specifically says—I quote from page 33 under paragraph number 123, because the issue has been raised about the legitimacy or the accuracy of the figures put forward by the expert retained by the Fifth Estate. The Ombudsman speaks to that:

“For my office's investigation, we retained our own expert, a professor from the department of statistical and actuarial sciences at an Ontario university, to assist with

our analysis of the various competing expert opinions. He echoed the comments of some of the others on the unreliability of the data on which Professor Rosenthal's assessment" had been "based."

He goes on to say, in his view—what he goes on to recommend, to put it in my own words, is that it's simply not sensible for the OLG to have responsibility both for driving ticket sales and overseeing those same said ticket sales. So he recommended that we remove that responsibility from the OLG, which is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Ferreira: Premier, Ontarians are demanding accountability, not culpability. Ontario families do not have confidence in the OLG, and Ontarians aren't going to play a game of chance with your government. The Ombudsman was clear: Your Liberal three amigos—Warren, Kinsella and Guy—met to design a cover-up.

If you want to prove that the Ombudsman is wrong, you'll need some proof. Will you order the lottery corporation to publicly release the minutes of the secret meeting so that we can confirm what we've discussed here today and previously? Or do you have something to hide?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think, again, what we're charged with here is defining and then upholding the public interest. There was a very real issue connected with the OLG; there's no doubt about that whatsoever. It was brought most prominently to the light of day as a result of a program that appeared on national TV. That gave rise to some very important questions.

First of all, the OLG reacted: They came out with a seven-point action plan. The Ombudsman did the right thing. He conducted his own investigation, very thorough. He came up with some specific recommendations of his own. We're acting on each and every one of those.

But beyond that, we've done something more than that. We've also referred this matter to the Ontario Provincial Police, and it's now in their hands to determine what, if anything, ought to be done further in that regard. I'm confident in saying that we're doing everything we can to ensure that people who are going to buy that lottery ticket can have confidence in the system and confidence in their government doing what we need to do to uphold the integrity of that system.

1450

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Ferreira: Premier, Ontarians may be buying lottery tickets, but they're not buying what you're trying to sell here in this House. Robert Edmonds spent the last few years of his life fighting your lottery corporation for winnings that were rightfully his. And on that, the Ombudsman said, "Instead of investigating what went wrong, as a good public servant would," the OLG "hired experts to dispute the CBC's findings, even though ... it knew full well that Mr. Edmonds was far from alone."

Three of your most trusted advisers, Premier, were at a meeting where these schemes were hatched. Will you order the OLG to publicly release the minutes of the secret meeting so that we can confirm what happened?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Something I mentioned just a moment ago: There was an issue connected with the credibility of the stats put forward by the Fifth Estate's expert. That's why the Ombudsman himself retained his own expert. He retained a professor from the department of statistical and actuarial sciences at an Ontario university to assist with analysis of the various competing expert opinions. He goes on to say, "He echoed the comments of some of the others on the unreliability of the data" put forward by the Fifth Estate expert.

I think the important point here is that the Ombudsman said, "Look, folks, you've to change this. You've got to start collecting this data," and that's exactly what the OLG has undertaken to do. Beyond that, the Ombudsman said, "You can no longer have responsibility for overseeing ticket sales. You should remove that as a government, take that away from that body, and give it to another," and we are also doing that very thing.

Mr. Ferreira: The Premier is refusing to discuss the role of his three amigos: Warren Kinsella, Jim Warren and Don Guy. Is their involvement a coincidence, or is it a cover-up? Clearly, the ugly hands of this scandal reach right into the Premier's office. Premier, if you have nothing to hide, if your fingerprints aren't all over this cover-up, then surely you'll have no problem directing the OLG to release minutes of the meetings of the spinmeisters. So I ask again, Premier, will you reveal all of the facts? Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think what serves Ontarians' interests best is to understand that the OLG is an arm's-length agency. We do not have responsibility for its day-to-day oversight. There are a number of meetings there that are carried on on a regular basis, of course, in the normal operation of business. A number of different people would be invited to those meetings.

A program was aired on TV. It gave rise to some very legitimate concerns. On the basis of that, OLG put forward a seven-point action plan. Furthermore, on the basis of that airing, the Ombudsman took a specific interest in this issue. He made an inquiry, he came forward with some recommendations, and we will adopt each and every one of those recommendations, as will OLG. But beyond that, we've also referred this matter to the Ontario Provincial Police. We've now turned it over to them to do what they think is appropriate in the circumstances. We will continue to do whatever we need to do to ensure that Ontarians have confidence in the integrity of their Ontario lottery and gaming system.

Mr. Ferreira: I believe that Ontarians are best served by accountable and transparent government, and that's not what we're getting here.

Here's what the facts tell us: Senior officials in the minister's office knew about the McGuinty government's \$100-million lottery scandal in April 2006, and the Premier's spin-doctor team worked on covering it up. The scandal hit the airwaves, and the OLG decided to engage in a cover-up to discredit a sick, elderly man, and the spin-doctor team worked on covering it up.

Premier, if you have nothing to hide and you had nothing to do with directing the OLG to release or not

release minutes of the meeting of the spinmeisters, will you present all of the facts? Will you make things clear and transparent for us?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know that my colleague opposite would be interested in hearing once more the Ombudsman's assessment of our government's approach. He said, "This is the kind of support and commitment on behalf of government which is essential if we are to move forward to restore integrity and trust in the lottery system. I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change."

I want to put emphasis on his last couple of words: "ensuring change." We are doing what we need to do to bring about that positive, constructive change at OLG. They are also moving forward on their own seven-point action plan. A number of recommendations have been directed at us and at the OLG. We will move forward on each and every one of those. We will do what we need to to ensure that Ontarians can continue to have confidence in their Ontario and the lottery gaming system.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: My question is for the Premier. It's amazing, actually, that the corporation was arm's length when it suited them not to be doing anything in the period when there was fraud going on, but now they're all over it, taking credit for everything. These are the shortest arms in recorded human history, they were hugging them so tight with all their advisers.

Probably the most incredible lottery scandal story concerns a woman who walked away with a \$12.5-million jackpot when there were grave concerns about her being an insider and about how she came to have the ticket. After setting out the evidence as to things the woman confirmed and then denied, stories that changed and so on, the Ombudsman concludes as follows on page 20: "Incredibly, despite all of this, the corporation paid her the \$12.5 million after the ticket expired."

My question to the Premier is, what has your government done to ensure that the lottery corporation leaves absolutely no stone unturned to freeze and recover that \$12.5 million that seems to be in the hands of someone who shouldn't have it? What has your government done about that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We've done something that the leader of the official opposition never asked to us to do and which he apparently doesn't support. We referred this matter to the police. We've referred all these issues to the Ontario Provincial Police. We're asking them now to use their best judgment, make whatever determinations and take whatever actions they deem to be appropriate in the circumstances.

Mr. Tory: The Premier himself is a trained lawyer. He knows that while it's fine to turn it over to the OPP—and the only concern I've had there is that there are certain things they can't investigate, like your office and the minister's office—the fact is that if you want to protect that money or freeze that money or try to get the

money back from someone who shouldn't have it, that involves civil proceedings of some kind or other that would have to be engaged in by the lottery corporation. You know that.

My question was simply this: What specific steps has your government requested the lottery corporation to take, or what have they told you they're doing? Have you even bothered to ask them if they're taking any steps at all on the civil side to try to freeze and protect that money and get it back, so that someone who shouldn't have it doesn't keep it? I think that people are very interested in knowing, when someone has \$12.5 million they shouldn't have, what you're doing to get it back. What are you doing to get it back?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Ombudsman considered this matter in a very cool, thoughtful and rational way, and he came forward with some very specific recommendations that are contained within his report. Some of those are directed at the OLG; some of those are directed at us in our capacity as the government. We will both, in our respective capacities, act on each and every one of those.

Beyond that, again I say to the leader of the official opposition that we've also referred this matter to the police. If they think that some actions or other are appropriate in the circumstances, I'm sure they're going to want to take those actions.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): My question is to the Premier. Just now, in an answer you gave to a question by my colleague the member from York South–Weston, you said it was inappropriate and that the OLG was an arm's-length agency. If that's the case, my question to you is simply: Why was your chief of staff communicating with them, why was your communications officer communicating and why was a Liberal strategist communicating with the OLG? If you argue it's an arm's-length agency, then you shouldn't be dealing with them.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Ombudsman talks about the outcome of a number of meetings, beginning on page 25 of the same report. I would also commend the report and its reading to my friend opposite. He walks through the various statisticians and professors hired to look at how often retailers should be winning. He hired his own expert, who concluded that the Fifth Estate based their conclusion on unreliable data. He recommended that OLG keep track of who an insider is and the number of times insiders win. That's exactly what OLG is going to do.

1500

The Ombudsman also makes specific reference to the seven-point action plan put forward by the OLG. He says, "The OLG deserves some credit for finally taking some decisive action to address the fallout from the Fifth Estate."

I think that goes a great deal of the way toward resolving issues that may exist in the minds of Ontarians, but when you throw on top of that the Ombudsman's

specific report and the OPP looking at this, I think that goes a long way to lending some real comfort to the people of Ontario.

Mr. Bisson: Premier, you can't have it both ways. You can't come into this House and tell me and other members of this assembly that it's an arm's-length agency that you're not supposed to be communicating with, and at that very time have your chief of staff, your communications person, and Mr. Kinsella, who is basically a strategist for the Liberal Party, out there trying to figure out how to do damage control on what the Premier's office said was a communications problem.

So I'm going to ask you this question: Is it or is it not appropriate for your staff to be communicating with the OLG? Is it a conflict?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The people who I'm told by members of the opposition attended the meeting were not in my employ. They were not working for me.

I think it's important to understand again that the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. has every right to convene its own meetings and it has every right to invite whomever they think is appropriate to attend those meetings. I think it's important, as well, to understand what the outcomes of those meetings were.

The outcome was a couple of things. First of all, there was a seven-point action plan, which is to improve confidence in our lottery and gaming system here in Ontario, and although that was commended by the Ombudsman, he took it a step farther and said, "Here are some of my own specific recommendations, and you should act on those," and the OLG is in fact doing that.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH EDUCATION

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): Ma question s'adresse d'abord à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Madame la ministre, la semaine dernière, nous accueillions à Queen's Park une délégation de jeunes francophones originaires de partout en province. Leur présence nous a rappelé l'importance de l'éducation en français en Ontario. Ces élèves dédiés et brillants démontrent que nous nous devons d'être fiers des initiatives que nous avons jusqu'à présent réalisées pour faire des écoles de langue française de l'Ontario des lieux propices à l'apprentissage.

Notre gouvernement a reconnu les défis uniques auxquels font face les conseils scolaires de langue française pour aider les élèves francophones à réussir. Toutes les statistiques le démontrent : le bilinguisme est un atout important que détiennent nos jeunes francophones, et pour que la francophonie poursuive son essor et conserve sa pertinence dans une économie en mutation, il est essentiel de former des jeunes francophones afin qu'ils s'élancent dans un éventail de domaines.

Madame la ministre, que faites-vous afin de vous assurer que l'éducation en français soit à la hauteur de nos attentes ?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Premièrement, je voudrais remercier le député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell d'avoir organisé ou participé à l'organisation du Parlement jeunesse. C'était excellent.

Vendredi dernier, j'ai eu le plaisir de faire une grande annonce au nom de la ministre de l'Éducation, M^{me} Wynne. Le plaisir est d'autant plus grand que l'annonce a touché deux causes qui me tiennent bien à cœur : l'essor du français et l'épanouissement de nos jeunes. Nous avons annoncé que la province investira 73 \$ millions de plus dans les écoles françaises de l'Ontario.

Depuis que notre gouvernement est arrivé au pouvoir, le financement par élève pour les conseils scolaires de langue française a augmenté de 42 %, ou de 317 \$ millions, pour atteindre plus d'un milliard pour l'année scolaire 2007-2008. L'investissement comprend 10 \$ millions au conseil scolaire de langue française pour des aides ciblées supplémentaires visant à offrir un éventail plus large de programmes et de cours, particulièrement dans les écoles secondaires de langue française. Un investissement comme celui-ci témoigne du caractère très concret de l'engagement du gouvernement envers l'éducation et envers la communauté francophone.

Mr. Lalonde: I am certain that the investments we have made have not gone unnoticed by our Franco-Ontarians.

My supplementary is to the Minister of Education. Minister, after years and years of underfunding under the previous government, after years and years of the previous government vilifying rather than respecting our educators, and after years and years of, as an OECTA teacher put it, Tory tyranny, the public education system was broken, the parents and educators were fed up.

Minister, what is our strategy to provide schools in the province with the resources they need to ensure all students succeed in our publicly funded schools? How has this strategy resulted in improvement for the francophone Ontarians in my riding?

L'hon. M^{me} Meilleur: Je réfère la question à la ministre de l'Éducation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): First, I'd like to thank the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for his question and also congratulate him on his central role in making the Parlement jeunesse happen last week.

I'm proud to say that Ontario students across the whole province will benefit from another year of significant education investments through the Liberal funding formula, and that stands in stark contrast to the record of the previous government. Education funding is going up \$781 million this year, a total of \$3.5 billion since we came into office in 2003.

The funding formula has guaranteed that the two French boards that the member represents will receive \$100 million in new funding since we came into office—\$6.9 million for 51 badly needed school repairs through our Good Places to Learn initiative; 133 new teachers.

That has meant that there has been an increase in test scores; teachers are teaching in smaller classes; test scores in grades 3 to 6 have gone up 12% in that riding.

Bilingual education, French education in this province is critical. We are a bilingual province in a bilingual country. It is part of what defines us that we would support our French-language boards and schools, and that is what we're doing.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville):

Again to the Premier and again dealing with the lottery scandal: Premier, you're persisting in trying to suggest to the public of Ontario that the participation of three of your key advisers in this effort to discredit the Fifth Estate report and Mr. Edmonds was just a coincidence, that there was no connection with you or your party or your political ambitions in the next election.

Don Guy is the re-election chair for your team, the re-election campaign manager; Warren Kinsella is a chief political adviser; Jim Warren is a former communications director. Premier, would you indicate to us if anyone in your office was made aware that these three key advisers were participating in this meeting?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Ombudsman covers these issues in his report in some considerable detail. The member opposite says this had to do with disparaging the report and the statistics accumulated by the Fifth Estate. But the Ombudsman himself says there were some real questions connected with that, and that's why he retained his own expert, paid somebody from a university to come forward. He said, "Take a look at these numbers." He goes on to say that this expert "echoed the comments of some of the others on the unreliability of the data" collected by the Fifth Estate.

So I think it's a very legitimate concern that OLG would have had, to want to take a close look at that data. But more importantly from Ontario's perspective, what came of those meetings? What has come is a couple of things that I think are really important. First of all, there's now a requirement that OLG collect this data in a scientific manner so that it's available for review; and secondly, OLG can no longer take responsibility for overseeing the sale of those tickets.

Mr. Runciman: The public will not fail to notice that the Premier refused to answer my question about the knowledge his office may have had of this meeting taking place and the participants. Yesterday he refused to answer the questions from our leader, John Tory, with respect to Mr. Guy's involvement—completely avoided answering those questions.

If the Premier likes to clear the air with respect to this, I want to make a suggestion and get his response. Would he agree to having these three individuals—Don Guy, Warren Kinsella and Jim Warren—appear before the justice committee next week to outline specifically what happened at that meeting?

1510

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think the Ombudsman has spoken of this at considerable length and in good detail and has come up with some very specific recommendations which satisfy most objective observers but obviously don't satisfy the opposition.

I think that what Ontarians might have a passing interest in is: Why is it that the official opposition is not asking any questions related to our budget? Is it because they're unhappy with the fact that we're providing more money to legal aid in the province of Ontario? Are they unhappy with the fact that we are finally going to fix that miserable property assessment system that we inherited and that was foisted upon the people of Ontario? Is it because they've been shamed into silence when it comes to knowing that we finally have a government that's going to speak up for children growing up in poverty? Is it the fact that they don't just want to hear about the tax relief we're providing for businesses? Are they ashamed of the fact that there's now a government that is going to upload the pooling responsibility that had been foisted upon the 905? Or perhaps they're not happy with the fact that we're going to put more money into housing, more money into developmental services—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question?

HAMILTON SPECIALTY BAR

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Premier. Hamilton Specialty Bar is set to close May 12, leaving 360 workers without a job. In fact, maybe as long as May 29 they may be open. Management and United Steelworkers have been working very hard together to try to ensure an orderly shutdown of the plant and to protect workers' pensions and their EI benefits. Now they're looking to find a buyer, and all they need is a little bit of help from different levels of government.

Premier, will you commit to helping this company find a buyer so those 360 workers and good-paying union jobs that they work at will be saved and preserved in the community of Hamilton?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I want to thank my friend from Hamilton East for the question. I am advised that the folks at Hamilton Specialty Bar have sent me a letter describing the situation there. The company is currently in CCAA—that's creditor protection, for those who don't understand the lingo. When a company comes within that umbrella under our court system, it's very important for the Minister of Finance or any minister of government not to comment directly on the circumstances. But I do want to tell my friend from Hamilton East that I await the letter from the company and I will be certainly responding urgently to that letter.

Ms. Horwath: When the big company called Stelco was in trouble, it seems to me that the government was prepared to help. But we all know that under the watch of this particular government, the Ontario economy has lost 144,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs. If Hamilton Specialty Bar closes and you remain idle, that's another 360 jobs to add to that terrible record.

All that HSB wants is a commitment that your government will be at the table. Whether that means at the table for tax breaks or financial grants or some kind of pension guarantee, all we need is some kind of guarantee that you're going to be there to help out in this crisis in order to make sure that there's a buyer at the end of the day.

Premier, my leader, Howard Hampton, and I are going to be rallying with workers tomorrow in Hamilton. What is your message to them? Why won't your government step in and commit to being at the table to help HSB find a buyer?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I think that, just in the tone of the question, you see the anger and the darkness and the dismay of members of the New Democratic Party. I just want to tell her something. Why doesn't she once stand up in her place and congratulate this government for what it did to save Stelco in her city? We worked very hard for that. Why doesn't she once stand up and talk about what we provided for Hamilton in each of our budgets?

The clouds of darkness that are cast over that party will make sure that 10 will be the high-water mark of members of this Legislature, thank God, after we go to the polls on October 10.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question?

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Hamilton East will come to order.

SMOKING LOUNGES

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. Minister, as a member of Peterborough council, which first passed a smoking ban in the city of Peterborough, and as a member of this government, which passed the Smoke Free Ontario Act, the strongest law of its kind in North America, I was sad to hear that smoking rooms are still in use in federal government buildings like the CBC building here in Toronto. Please tell me what you are doing to ensure that workers in Ontario are protected from the dangerous effects of second-hand smoke.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I want to thank the honourable member for Peterborough for the work he did and the leadership he showed on city council and then in supporting the Smoke Free Ontario Act, which, as he rightly pointed out, is the toughest anti-smoking legislation in North America.

While virtually every federally regulated business and industry, like banks and private broadcasters, is complying with the spirit of the Smoke Free Ontario Act, I

regretted to read that the CBC building in Toronto is not and, in fact, they're operating several smoking rooms within their facilities. Several months ago, I wrote to the federal minister in charge, Mr. Blackburn, who is the Minister of Labour, and to date we have not received a satisfactory response. But it's not just we who are concerned about the double standards set by the CBC. Michael Perley of OCAT, Andrew Jones of the Canadian Dental Association, Cynthia Callard of Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, Rocco Rossi from the Heart and Stroke Foundation and Peter Goodhand from the Canadian Cancer Society have all written to the federal government and said to the CBC that they should shut down—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Leal: Minister, I want to thank you for your decisive action. I can go back to my constituents and tell them that our government is doing everything we can to urge the federal government to close those smoking rooms. But I'm still very concerned about the health of Ontarians who work in federally regulated buildings. Is there anything else that we could do to protect those workers from this federal loophole?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I have contacted the president of the CBC and asked that he do the right thing and shut down those smoking rooms in the CBC headquarters. Good news and bad news. We heard yesterday from the CBC. The good news is they are going to shut them down. The bad news is, not until September.

The CBC appears to be the only organization federally regulated in Ontario that is using this federal loophole. I urge the CBC and the federal government to close the loophole and close the smoking lounges, protect the employees and protect the visitors that go to the CBC. Other organizations that are federally regulated are voluntarily complying: the Ottawa airport, the Toronto airport. The private sector is complying and going a step ahead of the Smoke Free Ontario Act. The Westin Hotel and the Marriott Hotel have gone 100% smoke-free.

So I urge Mr. Rabinovitch and the CBC and the federal government to bring their standards up to the Ontario government standards and make their places of work smoke-free for their employees.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Premier. Will the Premier clarify for the House precisely what responsibilities he has assigned the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal vis-à-vis the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I am sure that my colleague opposite has an interest in the ongoing issue, and I think he will know by now that while the minister has no immediate and direct oversight of the OLG—by that I mean he doesn't look at the day-to-day operations and, for

example, determine who's meeting with whom and those kinds of things, just as the previous minister himself admitted in the past when he said that he was unaware of the issue related to Mr. Edmonds—he does bear ultimate responsibility to ensure that any actions that are brought to the light of day that warrant redress are in fact taken. That's why we are so pleased with the Ombudsman's report, with the specific recommendations found within those and with the action plan put out by OLG itself. We intend to move forward on all of those.

Mr. Arnott: Of course, the Premier did not answer the question. Yesterday in this House he indicated that there is an arms-length relationship between the minister and the OLG, but I would refer the Premier to the annual report of the OLGC—then called the OLG—2004-2005, where the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal in his opening statements said the following, "As Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, responsible for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. ... I am pleased to present OLGC's ... annual report." Later on he says, "As the minister responsible, I will continue to provide OLGC with clear direction on the future of gaming for the benefit of all Ontarians."

Either the minister is responsible for the OLGC or he's not. Clearly, the minister thinks he is. That being the case, how could you not call for his resignation when there has been such a serious breach of the public trust?

1520

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm not disagreeing with my colleague that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal bears ultimate responsibility for what goes on at the OLG; I'm not disagreeing with that. What I am saying is that he does not take responsibility for the day-to-day operations, just as the former minister himself said that he was unaware of the incident that affected Mr. Edmonds that happened on his watch. That came to the light of day on our watch, so we're doing what we think is appropriate on our watch. We're acting on the recommendations of the Ombudsman. We're certainly supporting the OLG when it comes to their seven-point action plan, and we think all of those speak to our determination to uphold the public interest and to make sure Ontarians have confidence in their lottery system.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, people in Windsor woke up to the troubling news on the radio the other morning that Windsor GM will lay off 375 workers at the transmission plant. They have to ask themselves the question: Where is their Minister for Economic Development? Was she in Windsor? Was she in her hometown? Was she fighting to save the jobs of her constituents?

The answer was no. She's in Japan, the home of Honda, the home of Suzuki, the home of Toyota; all the while, GM Canada is handing out pink slips. Mr. Premier, why did you send your minister to Japan when

this week, of all weeks, she should be in Windsor fighting for the citizens of that community?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The member opposite cannot possibly know the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, because if he did, he would not level those kinds of accusations against her. If there is one member of this House who is more effective and more adept at championing their constituency than Sandra Pupatello, I have yet to meet that individual. She is now in Japan, working as hard as she can to improve our economy here in Ontario.

My friend opposite may say that we're going to put up walls, that we're going to close ourselves off to the rest of the world in an era of global economics, but we're not afraid of the rest of the world. We will continue to work with every single sector, including the auto sector, to ensure that we can strengthen that sector long into the future. I'm pleased to say we've landed \$7 billion worth of new investment, we've secured or protected 7,000 jobs, and we will keep working as hard as we can to improve the quality of prospects for people who work in the auto sector and every other industry in this province.

Mr. Prue: I'm not worried about putting up the walls, but I'm worried about the walls falling in in Windsor and the roof collapsing onto people's heads. That's the problem.

You know, your minister is not a Minister of Economic Development; she is looking after the largest decline in manufacturing jobs in the history of this province. I want to quote the Windsor Star because obviously they think very differently from you. The Windsor Star writes: "It's about time that Dwight Duncan and Sandra Pupatello showed Finance Minister Greg Sorbara a map of Ontario that includes the city of Windsor. If they can still remember where Windsor is." Hint, Mr. Premier: It's nowhere near Tokyo and it's not even in Japan.

When will this government deliver the goods for Windsor, a community job strategy to sustain those jobs, real action for a tunnel, a third border crossing, and help for those workers who are losing their jobs?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: My only regret is that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade is not here to speak to that, but perhaps he would not raise that kind of question were she present.

I'll just begin with a short list in terms of the investments that we've made working with the people of Windsor. Whether it's the satellite medical school, the investment in MRI, the hospital construction investments being made there now, whether it's the multi-million-dollar investment in the casino expansion, whether it's the money that's going into public transit through the gas tax, whether it's the investments being made in their public schools, whether it's the investment being made in their roads and their bridges, whether it's the investment that has been made in infrastructure generally, whether it's the global investment made by the people of Ontario and the community of Windsor as an indispensable part of this province, I can tell you that Windsor is very

important to this government. One of the reasons that it's so important to this government is because when this member is present, whether physically or not, she ensures that she holds our feet to the fire to make sure that we continue to work with the people of Windsor to ensure that they have bright prospects.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question, the member for Ottawa–Orléans. Order. We're wasting time.

BUREAU DES OBLIGATIONS FAMILIALES

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): Ma question s'adresse à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires. Madame la ministre, je suis d'accord avec vous qu'un enfant ne devrait pas subir de privations parce qu'un parent se soustrait à ses obligations familiales.

Il y a presque trois ans, le gouvernement McGuinty a commencé à remanier le BOF, Bureau des obligations familiales, pour mieux desservir les familles de l'Ontario, et nous constatons déjà des progrès. Si c'est le cas, pourquoi reste-t-il encore 1,3 \$ milliard d'arriérés ?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Je voudrais remercier mon collègue d'Ottawa–Orléans pour son implication, non pas seulement dans la francophonie, mais pour aider ses commettants.

Laissez-moi mentionner les arriérés que les gouvernements précédents ont laissés en Ontario. En date de juin 2006, plus de 81 % des arriérés, totalisant près de 1,1 \$ milliard, datent de quatre ans ou plus. Alors nous sommes en train de nettoyer le "mess" qui a été laissé par les deux partis qui ont été avant nous. Par conséquent, le présent gouvernement a dû faire du rattrapage au Bureau des obligations familiales. Nous avons déjà investi 40 \$ millions dans le bureau, et nous sommes déterminés à améliorer le mode de fonctionnement du bureau pour que les familles obtiennent le soutien auquel elles ont droit.

C'est pourquoi je suis heureuse que le Bureau des obligations familiales a des initiatives axées sur de meilleurs services à la clientèle ainsi qu'un nouveau site Web : www.lesbonsparentspayent.com, qui permet de retrouver les parents en défaut de paiement de leur pension alimentaire.

Mr. McNeely: Thank you, Minister. My staff in my riding office tell me that the Family Responsibility Office is much more responsive to the parents and children in need in our community, and I think you've made great progress with that.

You mentioned www.goodparentspay.com, where you post the names and photos of those who have defaulted on their court-ordered child support payments. You should be commended for this innovative step to protect the interests of Ontario children. It is important that

parents receive our message: If you refuse to pay court-ordered child support, we will track you down and make sure you live up to your family responsibilities.

Nonetheless, some of my constituents would like to know why there are no women posted on the goodparentspay.com site.

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: The new web page has already helped the FRO work better for Ontario children and their families. For instance, the site has already received over 19 million hits. Five individuals who have defaulted have been found because of the site.

To answer the question that was asked by my colleague, approximately 95% to 97% of defaulting payers are men, so the pool of potential payers contains many more males. We will, however, post the profile of any defaulting payers who meet our criteria, regardless of their gender.

Let me read to you a note that was sent to me by one of the moms: "This morning I was listening to the news and heard about your new program, goodparentspay.com. I was so relieved to know that all the children waiting for action on their case were not forgotten. That you stood behind your election"—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): My question is for the Premier. The Premier has talked repeatedly about the public interest, but what he fails to understand is that if he had taken the public's interest to heart, he would have moved heaven and earth at the first sign, the first whiff that something was amiss at the OLG with insider wins. But instead he didn't do that. Instead, we had a whole group of his spin doctors gathering on a Sunday to cobble together a plan to spin this issue: Don Guy, Warren Kinsella and Jim Warren, all with impeccable Liberal stripes. Instead of the public interest, he looked at his own partisan interest.

The Premier refused to answer the question as to whether or not anybody in his office was aware of this meeting, so we can only assume that somebody was, which proves all the more that we need an independent investigation to look into what was going on in his office.

Premier, will you appoint such an investigation?

1530

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): It's always a pleasure to hear from our colleagues opposite.

I will have tremendous patience as they move forward. They have a responsibility to bring forward issues that they think are appropriate, and we have a responsibility to define and then uphold the public interest.

There was a very important issue raised as a result of an airing of the Fifth Estate. That matter prompted the OLG to hold a number of meetings. What's important is

that certain actions flowed from those meetings. One of those was a seven-point action plan.

The Ombudsman himself decided to take a keen personal interest in this issue. He moved in, conducted an investigation, came up with a report and put forward some very specific recommendations. We intend to follow each and every one of those to the letter, but we've done something beyond that. We've also asked that the Ontario Provincial Police take a look at this matter and determine whether there are actions they should be taking in these circumstances.

PETITIONS

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs" \$1.5 "million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

"Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required" \$1.5 "million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston."

I agree with the petition, and I have signed it.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every citizen of Ontario should have a safe, healthy and decent home; and

"Whereas thousands of individuals and families are denied this basic right when the province of Ontario downloaded affordable housing to the city of Toronto but refused to pay for the hundreds of millions of dollars in deferred capital repairs; and

"Whereas poor living conditions undermine the safety and security of communities, harming children, youth and families living in affordable homes; and

"Whereas failure to invest in good repair undermines the values of the province's affordable housing as the condition of the housing stock deteriorates; and

"Whereas poor living conditions have a damaging impact on the health of communities, costing Ontarians millions in health costs; and

"Whereas investment in housing pays off in better residences and in stronger, safer, healthier communities; and

"Whereas residents of Toronto Community Housing have waited five years for the province to pay its bills and bring affordable housing to a state of good repair;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Accept its responsibilities and invest \$300 million to ensure that all residents of Toronto Community Housing have a safe, decent and healthy home."

It's sign by residents of 444 Lumsden, in my riding of Beaches-East York. I am in agreement and would affix my signature thereto.

CORMORANTS

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas recent scientific studies have conclusively demonstrated that double-crested cormorants consume more fish than commercial fishing, sport fishing and poaching combined;

"Whereas double-crested cormorants are devastating nesting areas for other birds;

"Whereas double-crested cormorants are fouling water and making beaches unusable;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the private member's Bill 156 of Ernie Parsons, MPP Prince Edward-Hastings, to reclassify the double-crested cormorant into the same family as American crows, brown-headed cowbirds and the common grackle. This will allow for greatly increased opportunities for the culling of cormorants, in addition to other steps being taken to control cormorant populations and protect the environment."

I'm presenting this on behalf of the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, and I sign it in support.

LAKERIDGE HEALTH

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has directed Lakeridge Health to cut mental health and addiction services and children's mental health services in order to balance its budget; and

"Whereas the ministry has directed these cuts, bypassing the Central East Local Health Integration Network, whose director has stated 'there will be no reduction in mental health and addiction services within the Central East LHIN'; and

"Whereas these cuts will likely transfer costs rather than save them, putting additional pressure on Lakeridge's emergency department, Durham police, Whitby mental health and social service providers; and

"Whereas the central east already receives amongst the lowest per capita hospital funding in the province;

"We, the undersigned, request the Ontario Legislative Assembly to revisit this decision and ensure Durham residents receive appropriate support for adults and children who need treatment for mental health and addictions."

I affix my name in support.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have a very short petition here. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that Lakeridge Health should have full funding and not be facing an \$8-million shortfall;

"Whereas this would affect many programs, including the mental health program at Lakeridge Health;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fully fund the \$8-million shortfall for Lakeridge Health."

I am in agreement and would sign my signature thereto.

GTA POOLING

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's entitled "End GTA Pooling: Pass Ontario Budget."

I especially want to thank Marla McAlpine of Aird and Berlis, the law firm downtown, for having collected some of these signatures.

It reads as follows.

"Whereas the city of Mississauga faces a long-term labour shortage, resulting in some 60,000 more people commuting into the city of Mississauga than leave Mississauga to earn their living and support their families each and every day; and

"Whereas 10 years ago the Ontario government of that day introduced the concept of GTA pooling, whereby funds are taken from the municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto and channelled into the city of Toronto without benefit or accountability to the taxpayers of those fast-growing cities, which face big-city needs and issues of their own; and

"Whereas GTA pooling places an additional tax burden on the municipal property tax bases of some \$40 million each and every year to the city of Mississauga; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario in its 2007-08 budget proposes to completely eliminate GTA pooling during a seven-year span beginning in fiscal year 2007-08, and that as pooling is phased out, Ontario will take responsibility for social assistance and social housing costs currently funded by GTA pooling;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties within the government of Ontario support the swift passage of the 2007-08 Ontario budget and ensure that its provisions ending GTA pooling are implemented."

I agree wholeheartedly with this petition, and I affix my signature and ask page Calla to carry it for me.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): I'm reading a petition today from residents of Nepean–Carleton who are disappointed with last week's budget.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, according to the Department of National Defence, there are over 30,000 serving military personnel who call Ontario home; and

"Whereas, according to the most recent census data, there are more than 1.6 million senior citizens over the age of 65 living in Ontario; and

"Whereas the PC Party of Ontario plans on eliminating this illegitimate tax for all Ontarians after it forms the government in 2007; and

"Whereas, as an interim measure, this illegitimate health tax should be removed from those who protect Canada and those who have built Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario to immediately eliminate the province's illegitimate health tax, beginning with serving military personnel and senior citizens."

I support this petition, and I affix my signature, along with thousands of other Nepean–Carleton residents.

1540

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding the aging population. I'm presenting it on behalf of the member for Windsor–St. Clair. It ends with:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

I've also signed this.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I think, as the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound just pointed out, it's a major issue in the province of Ontario. I, too, have people coming in to my office wanting to sign a petition, and I have it here for you, Mr. Speaker. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I believe my constituents have it right.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I actually seek your guidance and your counsel on this. I'm not sure how this rule applies, but when a petition is read, does it not have to conform with the rules of the House that a member is named by their riding and/or their ministry? I'm just curious. I actually would really like to know that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The answer is no.

SALE OF DOMESTIC WINES AND BEERS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'm pleased to support my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls, in a petition that I know is near and dear to his heart, in support of, I believe, a private member's bill that he has

introduced. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the province of Ontario restricts the sale of domestic wines and beers to the LCBO, the Beer Store and a few winery retail stores; and

"Whereas other provinces (notably Quebec) have been selling beer and wine in local convenience stores for ages without any harm to the well-being of the public; and

"Whereas it is desirable to promote the sale of 100% Ontario VQA wines and Ontario brewed beer in a convenient manner consistent with a contemporary society, to promote locally grown and produced products, and support local convenience stores; and

"Whereas it is obvious that the market trends of selling wines and beer in convenience stores is not 'if' but when;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Liquor Control Act to permit the sale of 100% Ontario grown VQA wines and Ontario brewed beer in local convenience stores to the public throughout the province and to do it now."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition and to ask page Hayley to carry it for me.

LAKERIDGE HEALTH

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has directed Lakeridge Health to cut mental health and addiction services and children's mental health services in order to balance its budget; and

"Whereas the ministry has directed these cuts, bypassing the Central East Local Health Integration Network, whose director has stated 'there will be no reduction in mental health and addiction services within the Central East LHIN'; and

"Whereas these cuts will likely transfer costs rather than save them, putting additional pressure on Lakeridge's emergency department, Durham police, Whitby Mental Health and social service providers; and

"Whereas the Central East already receives amongst the lowest per capita hospital funding in the province;

"We, the undersigned, request the Ontario Legislative Assembly to revisit this decision and ensure Durham residents receive appropriate support for adults and children who need treatment for mental health and addictions."

I'm certainly in agreement with this petition, and I'm pleased to affix my signature to it.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I am once again assisting my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls, with this petition. It's about physical activity. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

"Whereas Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

"Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools."

I'd like to especially thank Amber French of Balmoral Drive in Oshawa for having collected these signatures. I'll affix my signature and ask page Thomas to carry it for me.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INDEPENDENT POLICE REVIEW ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'EXAMEN INDÉPENDANT DE LA POLICE

Mr. Zimmer, on behalf of Mr. Bryant, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to establish an Independent Police Review Director and create a new public complaints process by amending the Police Services Act / Projet de loi 103, Loi visant à créer le poste de directeur indépendant d'examen de la police et à créer une nouvelle procédure de traitement des plaintes du public en modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe Mr. Zimmer is going to lead off the debate. I recognize the member for Willowdale

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I rise in the House today to open third reading debate on Bill 103, the Independent Police Review Act, 2007. The McGuinty government is committed to being tough on the causes of crime. Being tough on crime means giving our police officers the resources they need to keep our communities safe and secure. It means ensuring that our police forces have everything they need to combat crime, including organized crime and gun crime.

The McGuinty government is doing everything it can to ensure the entire justice system has the resources to bring people who commit crimes like gun crimes to

justice. We have put 1,000 new police officers on the streets in communities throughout Ontario. Last January, we announced \$51 million in new funding to fight gun crime and gang violence. This funding included a major expansion of the guns and gangs task force, which includes several police services such as the Toronto Police Services Board, the Ontario Provincial Police, a team of specialized crown prosecutors, support staff, probation and parole officers, and a victims' unit.

We recently opened a state-of-the-art provincial operation centre that will better allow for highly coordinated investigations and prosecutions of gun- and gang-related offences. We are also creating two major crime courts to accommodate large-scale, complex gang cases. The first is now operational; the second is scheduled to open this fall.

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And there is more, much more. This government has instituted mandatory gunshot wound reporting, gun amnesty programs to get weapons off our streets, blitz inspections of gun-licensed businesses, and a strengthened witness protection program.

The Premier and the Attorney General have both called for stronger statutory measures to combat gun crime, including mandatory minimums for certain firearms offences and reverse onuses on bail for those accused of a gun crime. We are pleased to see that these calls have been heard and that these calls have been heeded.

The McGuinty government has also worked hard to be tough on the causes of crime. We have created new affordable housing units, increased social assistance, expanded youth justice programs, and enhanced and expanded community programming in our school facilities. We have launched a series of programs with community groups, schools, sports and recreation groups, and faith-based community leaders, amongst others, to target at-risk youth and reduce violence in our communities.

All of our hard work is paying off. We have seen a very significant reduction in the incidence of gun violence in our communities this past year. Our communities are safer, our law enforcement agencies are stronger, and Ontario is stronger as a result of our hard work.

This bill is another step forward in strengthening our police forces to help keep our communities safe. Almost a year ago, the Attorney General introduced this legislation that would, if passed, entrench an independent and transparent police review system in Ontario. Our government's goal has always been to create a police review system that has the confidence and respect of both the public and the police. Our goal is to improve and strengthen the way concerns about the police are dealt with. Our goal is to foster trust and respect for the system and to strengthen relationships of confidence between police and the public. Our proposed legislation will do just that.

The Independent Police Review Act, 2007, would, if passed, provide the public with a significant new standard of police accountability. At the same time, it

would ensure that there is no unnecessary interference with the excellent work done by Ontario's police services in keeping our communities safe.

I would remind my fellow members that in 2004, we asked the former Chief Justice of Ontario's Superior Court of Justice, the Honourable Patrick LeSage, to conduct a review of Ontario's police complaints system. In addition to reviewing written submissions from the public and holding public hearings, Mr. LeSage travelled extensively across the province to meet personally with over 200 individuals and 85 groups representing the police and the general public. It was the most exhaustive review of police complaints in Ontario history. After this extensive study, Justice LeSage made a number of recommendations to improve the current system, in which police themselves are responsible for the intake and investigation of complaints.

I would like to thank Justice LeSage once again for dedicating his time and his experience to conducting this important review. His well-thought-out recommendations are the foundation of our proposed new system, one that we believe is equitable and effective for all Ontarians, police and the public.

I'd like to note that our legislation proposes amendments to the Police Services Act only in those areas where Justice LeSage made a recommendation. We are proposing changes to distinct and discrete parts of the Police Services Act. This has not been about a general review of the act.

Among other things, the LeSage report called for the creation of an independent civilian body to oversee police complaints systems in Ontario. The availability of an independent body to which concerns can be brought would be a significant new option for the public. This option is the cornerstone of the Independent Police Review Act. Our proposed legislation would establish a new police complaints system administered by a civilian organization and led by an independent police review director. The director would provide independent civilian review at three important stages.

First, the director would be responsible for the intake and initial screening of public complaints about the police. At this point, the director would be able to weed out any complaints that are without foundation. The director would also have the option of deciding not to pursue a complaint if, having considered all of the circumstances, he or she determined that to do so would not be in the public interest.

Secondly, once the complaint is screened, and if it is deemed valid, the director would decide how the investigation would be carried out. The director would determine, on a case-by-case basis, who would investigate the complaint—the civilian body, the subject police service or another police force. Following an investigation, the chief of police would make decisions about discipline, if appropriate.

The director's third level of review would involve examining these decisions. The matter could then be referred for a disciplinary hearing if there were reason-

able grounds to believe that there was conduct or unsatisfactory performance involved. Any matters going to a disciplinary hearing would be heard by a hearing officer, and for the first time, the province would set standards for those officers. The goal of such standards would be the promotion of a high-quality, independent and efficient adjudication of disciplinary matters under the Police Services Act. If the legislation were passed we could, for example, consider creating standards setting minimum levels of experience for hearing officers and require that certain training requirements be met.

In addition to the three levels of review I've just detailed, the new independent police director would also be required to provide the public with accessible information and assistance regarding the public complaints process, and the director would carry out periodic performance audits of the administration of the public complaints process. This would ensure that the proposed system is running sensibly and efficiently.

This bill would also make it easier to handle complaints best dealt with outside the complaints system. The director would not be required to handle a complaint if it could better be dealt with under another act or another provision of law. This would ensure that the public's concerns are dealt with in the most appropriate manner.

In developing this legislation, we did not want the public to be prevented from bringing complaints directly to the police if they still wanted to. So individual members of the public would still be able to make complaints directly to their local police service board if they prefer to do so. A procedure for that process would be set out in the regulations. But through this proposed legislation, we are offering the public an important avenue for bringing forward their concerns.

Members of the public would also have the option of withdrawing complaints at any time. Further, complaints could be resolved informally at any time. The proposed legislation would allow us to design an informal resolution process as part of the legislation's implementation phase.

If our proposed legislation is passed, third-party complaints would be allowed if they've met certain legislative criteria. Again, if the director determined that a complaint was without foundation, whether that complaint came from a third party or not, it would be rejected at the outset. This is a very important feature, since we refuse to allow our police services to be bogged down with unfounded complaints.

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Justice LeSage recognized that third party complaints should be allowed where they are supported by cogent evidence. We feel that the provisions in Bill 103 balance the needs and interests of the public and the police in relation to third party complaints. Our proposed legislation would provide the independent civilian directorate with search and seizure powers. Search and seizure powers were available to the former police complaints commission when that model was in place in Ontario throughout the 1980s and 1990s. These powers are also

consistent with search and seizure powers of other regulatory bodies in Ontario, including those governing security guards and lawyers, for instance. They are proposed for the simple reason that investigative bodies need investigative powers to be truly effective. Justice LeSage recognized this in his report.

The new director and appointed investigators would have the powers of a commission under part II of the Public Inquiries Act. These powers include the ability to summon witnesses to give evidence on oath or affirmation and the ability to require production of documents and other things as required for purposes of the investigation.

The proposed investigative powers have been drafted with an eye to balancing the ability to conduct effective investigations with the rights of the police officers being investigated. We anticipate that these search and seizure powers would only be used in rare situations where the director might not be able to access records or other materials required to carry out a meaningful investigation.

If this legislation is passed, we would aim to have the system in place in approximately one year. This would allow us time to set up the new civilian organization and hire a highly qualified director to oversee the program. As you've heard, the position of independent police director would be a challenging one. This person would need to be sensitive to the interests and concerns of the police and the community and, very importantly, enjoy the confidence of both of those entities, the police and the public. Our primary goal would be to ensure the highest level of confidence in any appointee.

During the second reading debate, many of my fellow members were vocal in their calls to send this bill to committee hearings. We did just that. The standing committee on justice policy met to consider Bill 103, and public hearings were held in Toronto on January 30 and 31 and February 1 of this year. All interested parties had the opportunity to share their opinions. The committee heard from a number of individuals and groups representing a wide spectrum of viewpoints. In the interests of time, I will only mention some of them, but the list of presenters included the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Police Association of Ontario, the Toronto Police Accountability Coalition, and a number of community groups who have had an interest in this legislation and have been following it closely. We are grateful to everyone who took part in the committee hearings; their insights proved valuable.

As a result of the hearings, certain amendments have been made to strengthen this bill. Among other things, the committee accepted a government amendment that would allow the government to establish regional or other advisory committees. These committees would be made up of representatives from community groups, the policing community and any others that may be appropriate. Their role would be to advise the independent police review director on matters relating to outreach and public education.

Further, the committee saw fit to improve the bill with an amendment that would provide for cooling-off periods in relation to informal resolutions. This 12-day cooling off period would provide members of the public and the police with adequate time to consider a resolution before being bound by it. This amendment would encourage informal resolutions while ensuring that those resolutions are acceptable to the parties involved.

The committee also agreed to an amendment that would, if the legislation is passed, ensure that when a director is deciding whether or not to allow a complaint to be filed beyond the six-month limitation period, he or she would have to take into account whether or not the complainant was subject to a criminal charge related to a complaint, was a minor, or was suffering a disability.

There were some proposals made at committee and in other forums that do not form a part of Bill 103, which is now before us, and I would like to take some time just to address those issues. There were proposals that would have amended Bill 103 to provide that all public complaints investigations would have to be carried out by the new director. That would have run counter to Justice LeSage's recommendations. Justice LeSage recommended that the police should still be able to conduct some investigations after initial intake and routing by a civilian body and subject to an ongoing review by a civilian body. This is consistent with what other jurisdictions are doing as well. In fact, such a process is consistent with the recommendations of Justice Dennis O'Connor in relation to the RCMP oversight organization that he has proposed in the policy component of the Arar commission.

There are also proposals for additional limits on third-party complaints. Mr. LeSage recommended that third-party complaints be allowed where supported by cogent evidence. We feel that the existing provisions of Bill 103 dealing with third party complaints strike the right balance. We feel that the existing provisions would accommodate both the interest of community groups and the concerns of the police.

One amendment proposed at committee would have made the proposed body directly accountable to this Legislature. I would remind members that the director would be fully accountable to the Legislature through a minister of the crown—in this case, the Attorney General. But it is essential that the proposed body be independent and operate at arm's length from the government, similar to numerous other provincial bodies with enforcement and adjudicative roles.

Another issue that came up during the committee hearings related to the standard of proof to be used in police disciplinary hearings. Further, the standard of proof that must be met before a police officer can be found, in the course of a disciplinary hearing, to have committed misconduct or unsatisfactory work performance is "clear and convincing evidence." It had been suggested that the standard of proof in disciplinary hearings be lowered or that there be a "sliding standard" linked to the seriousness of the alleged misconduct. That is to say,

minor allegations would have to meet a lower standard of proof.

In common law, the “clear, convincing and cogent” standard has been widely accepted as the correct standard in relation to professional discipline cases, as is the case with lawyers and medical professionals. It is very important to note that Mr. Justice LeSage considered the issue of standard of proof in relation to police disciplinary hearings and did not recommend any changes in the standard of proof. The standard is not as high as a criminal standard of “beyond a reasonable doubt,” but it does reflect the seriousness of misconduct hearings and the seriousness of their potential impact on police officers. A sliding standard that would vary depending on the severity of the allegations and penalties could lead to a very confusing situation and lead to a great deal of time, effort and argument spent on classification of disciplinary charges into more or less serious categories with shifting standards of proof.

For the benefit of my fellow members here, I would like to briefly address some of the criticisms that were raised during second reading of this bill.

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First, some thought that the independent police review director would be unaccountable, given the independent nature of the director's office. This is not the case. Like order-in-council appointees generally, the director would be accountable to the legislation through the responsible ministry; in this case, the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Secondly, the government is proposing a less costly and time-consuming appeals process that will offer finality to the parties sooner. The Superior Court of Justice of Ontario would retain its jurisdiction to judicially review decisions, as is the case generally with all adjudicative tribunal decision-making. This is consistent with broader efforts to reduce duplication and repetitive steps and to encourage tribunal excellence in all areas of administrative law and justice.

Thirdly, some asked why First Nations police are not included in this bill. Justice LeSage recommended that the proposed law should not preclude First Nations police services from opting into the system. We agree; they have not been excluded. The delivery of policing to First Nations communities is accomplished by agreement between the relevant First Nations government, Canada and the government of Ontario. These agreements are negotiated every few years. Any opting-in by First Nations police services will take place in the context of those renegotiations every few years.

Fourthly, some expressed concerns about investigators in the proposed system being primarily former police officers. While police officers would bring important knowledge and experience to a complaints investigation role, we recognize the importance of having investigators with wholly civilian backgrounds and non-policing perspectives. If this bill is passed, we would ensure that the proposed new body is staffed by a broad range of top-quality individuals who would provide excellent service to Ontarians.

At the outset, I said that we are seeking to establish a police complaint system that has the confidence of the public and the confidence of the police. If passed, this legislation would create a system that is fair and that is effective for the public and for the police. Our proposed system would strike the appropriate balance between upholding every individual citizen's right to bring concerns forward, while ensuring at the same time our police are not hampered by illegitimate complaints.

In his report, Mr. Justice LeSage wrote, “The trend across all jurisdictions is for more robust forms of civilian oversight of the police. This fact should cause neither surprise nor concern given the role of the police in our modern society, the work of the police, the power that the police wield and the potential for abuse of that power.”

I would like to point out that we are not the only jurisdiction to receive recommendations calling for a more robust oversight. In December 2006, the Arar commission, headed by the Associate Chief Justice of the Ontario Court of Appeal, Mr. Justice Dennis O'Connor, recommended the creation of an independent complaints and national security review agency for the RCMP. Many of the recommendations made by Justice O'Connor in relation to civilian oversight of the RCMP are consistent with the approach and standards of Bill 103 in relation to police complaints and review in Ontario.

Among other things, Justice O'Connor recommended that this proposed oversight should have extensive investigative powers similar to those used in public inquiries, including the power to subpoena documents and compel testimony. He recommended that such a body have the power to conduct public education programs and provide information concerning the review body's role and activities. He also recommended the power to engage in or to commission research on matters affecting the review body. Perhaps most significantly, Justice O'Connor recommended that this proposed federal police oversight body have the ability to refer to the RCMP for investigation or to investigate the complaint itself, if deemed appropriate. This is consistent also with the advice of Mr. Justice LeSage here in Ontario, advice which we propose to implement in Bill 103.

The RCMP is an important policing presence affecting the lives and liberty of Ontarians. They are the creature of the federal government. I repeat, however, the call that Ontario and other provinces have made at the federal-provincial-territorial justice table: that the government of Ontario legislate an independent system to oversee RCMP activities that reflects the recommendation of the Arar inquiry report. Ultimately, improved oversight and accountability helps us all—the police and the public. It will assure members of the public that the police are held to the highest standards. More often than not, I think the measures proposed in Bill 103 would show members of the public that the police consistently meet and exceed the high expectations we have for them.

If passed, Bill 103 will only increase the community's faith in the police, which will lead to increased co-

operation between the police and the public and ultimately increased public safety for all Ontarians. I encourage all members of this House to support Bill 103 so that all Ontarians can benefit from having a significant new option in dealing with police complaints.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased to rise today and make a few comments. I'm looking forward to my colleague former Solicitor General Bob Runciman speaking on behalf of our party. I'll be sharing some of the time with him.

While I have the floor, I'd like to introduce to the folks in the House here a good friend of mine, Frank Takacs, and his stepdaughter, Karley White, who are here today with us. Frank was an OPP officer for 32 years. He also puts up a lot of election signs for me during the campaigns. So a good round of applause from the government members would be nice here.

While I've got the floor, I want to point out that my hometown community of Coldwater, Ontario, has the Canadian champion curler curling out of it right now: Glenn Howard. He's 6 and 0 and he's tied in the fourth end in the current game he's had today. We hope he goes to 7-0 and wins the world championship.

I do look forward to additional comments on this bill. I have to tell you up front, though, that in my eight years as an MPP, I've seldom have had a complaint about any police officer. I've had more complaints about Minister Caplan in the last week than I've had about—10 times as many complaints—all the police officers combined in eight years. So maybe we should have a ministers' complaint department. However, we look forward to this debate.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): Bob Runciman likes the Integrity Commissioner a lot.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm hearing the member from Green Lane complain again. He has to heckle me whenever I get on my feet.

I'll have lots to say a little later on. I look forward to lots of debate on Bill 103.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I hope to have an opportunity to speak to the details of this bill a little later. But I was a bit struck by the comments made by the member for Willowdale when he talked about being tough on crime and being tough on the causes of crime. He mentioned housing. He has some particular knowledge about this because he was the chair of the Toronto Community Housing Corp. I just want to remind him that the Toronto Community Housing Corp. and many of the tenants have a campaign urging the Liberal government to bring them the support they need. It's a \$300-million capital campaign that they have been waiting for for quite some time to repair their buildings, to bring them up to the standards that any human being might be accustomed to. Those buildings are in terrible need of repair. After 30, 40 or 50 years, some of these buildings are literally falling apart and need to be rebuilt.

1620

The government announced \$125 million across Ontario, and Toronto might get \$20 million. Toronto alone has \$300 million that they're asking for to retrofit, to repair, to replace, so that people can feel good in the homes in which they live, and we got so little. He was the former chair, and I wondered whether he would like to speak to that.

I also think that he, as someone concerned about housing, would talk about the fact that so much more is needed by way of public housing, because in Toronto alone there are 60,000 people waiting for support to get into public housing. They've built nothing, except for a couple of hundred units. People in the city of Toronto can't afford to live in housing and are waiting in line to get into public housing. With his expertise, I wonder whether he might comment on what I had to say about that.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'll try something completely original: I'll speak about the bill.

Let me add a few endorsements that some people have given us about this particular bill. Mayor David Miller, of the city of Toronto, said of the bill, "I believe Torontonians have great faith in their police services, but this should ensure that their faith grows stronger. Where there are problems, people will have a real right to deal with them and have them addressed."

One of the other organizations that came in with some very strong support of the bill was the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. What did they have to say about the bill? "'Both citizens and police require a police complaints system that they can have confidence in,' said Chief Terry McLaren, president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. 'We believe this legislation will help strike the right balance between the needs of the public and the police in terms of dealing with complaints.'"

We have André Marin, the Ontario Ombudsman, who said, "I would like to say at the outset that the government of Ontario deserves credit for introducing Bill 103, which reforms the public complaints process and establishes the office of the independent police review director, a new police oversight agency with wide-ranging powers to oversee and investigate police complaints."

I've got time for perhaps one more. Alan Borovoy, of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, says the following: "Bill 103 makes a number of welcome moves ... and to this extent, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association commends the initiative."

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean-Carleton): It's my pleasure to add a two-minute hit on Bill 103 before our former Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services, Bob Runciman, the member from Leeds-Grenville, leads off on this.

First, I'm very proud to be able to stand here today and talk a little bit about policing. It was in my background when I was growing up as a little girl in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia—actually, until recently. My dad

is still the police commissioner of the town, and he was able to sit on the federal Solicitor General's task force under the former Liberal federal government. He was also president of the Canadian Association of Police Boards, so names like Julian Fantino, Herb Kreling and Norm Gardner became very familiar around the kitchen table. We do know a little bit about policing in Nepean-Carleton, and certainly in my background in the MacLeod family. We're proud of my father, Daniel J. MacLeod.

In any event, there are just two things I'd like to touch on before we get into this bill in depth. I understand we want to start talking about being tough on crime, especially with the folks opposite, and the best time to do it is right now, with the Harper government, the Conservatives in Ottawa, really clamping down and becoming tough on crime. They're doing a heck of a job to make Canada safe and Ontario safe and the nation's capital safe and the riding which I represent in the nation's capital safe. So I really appreciate the tough-on-crime stance of that government.

With respect to the city of Ottawa, we needed almost 190 new police officers. In the summer, we were only awarded with the funding for 92. We still need funding for about another 100 officers in the city of Ottawa, so I urge members opposite to take that.

In addition, in the 18 seconds that I've got left, I want to talk a little bit about Bill 165, which installs a new independence to the independent child advocate. The unfortunate thing, of course, is that incarcerated kids, kids in the penal system, will not have access to this advocate anymore when it becomes an officer of the Legislative Assembly. So I urge members opposite to consider that as well.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Willowdale.

Mr. Zimmer: The essence of this exercise, the essence of Bill 103, is, what do we do to establish a system that the police and the members of the public can have confidence in, that will fairly deal with the concerns of a complainant and the concerns of a police officer having to respond to the complaint? So we need to maintain the confidence of both the public and the police if our rule-of-law system is going to work on the civil side, the criminal side and the administrative side.

The confidence that Bill 103 is going to lead to in members of the public and members of the police is really based on four or five elements. The first element is, is there a process in place, a structure for processing or dealing with complaints that will work for all parties who have to engage in that process? Bill 103 does that. Then we get down into another level of detail, and we ask ourselves, are the rules that are applicable to that structure—how that process is going to play out—fair, balanced and reasonable? The third thing we have to ask ourselves is, does the public have confidence in the people managing that process, the directors, the investigators, the deciders about the complaint, whether it's

justified or not? Are they well trained? Are they judicious? Are they fair? Bill 103 guarantees that, with a range of public members who are going to be a part of that process. They're going to be trained. They're going to be leaders from their community.

So when we sit back and look at this process that Bill 103 contemplates, we look at the parts, the pieces of it—the process piece, the rules piece, the personnel piece, if I can use that expression; that is, the director and workers—Bill 103 guarantees that the system will work.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 103. I will be doing the leadoff and sharing that with the member for Simcoe North, Mr. Dunlop, who is our party's critic for community safety and who sat with me during the committee hearings on this legislation. It was an interesting opportunity to talk about the police complaints process. We did certainly have a number of informative witnesses, entertaining in some respects, appear before us, and people who I think made real a contribution to the process.

I have to say to the parliamentary assistant—I've had the opportunity to sit with him on a couple of justice bills now during the life of the government—

Mr. Marchese: He's a nice guy.

Mr. Runciman: He is a nice guy. I think he's a competent and dedicated individual. It's truly regrettable that those talents haven't been recognized by the people in the corner office, but that's one of the realities of politics; it doesn't always happen. In any event—

Interjection.

Mr. Runciman: Well, you never know. That's not necessarily true. We've still got a few months to see what transpires.

I'll be sort of jumping all over the place, I suppose, based somewhat on the parliamentary assistant's remarks and responding to some of those. His comments and the comments of some of his colleagues in quoting some of the individuals who appeared before us also prompt me to put some other comments on the record as well, related to police complaints.

1630

My NDP colleague Mr. Marchese—I apologize; I don't know his riding—mentioned the parliamentary assistant's reference to this sort of tough-on-crime myth that the Liberal members try to perpetrate, which is not selling at all.

I can't miss the opportunity to remind viewers and others that after the summer of the gun in 2005 in Toronto, it was revealed that the Attorney General, Mr. Bryant, and the community safety minister, Mr. Kwinter, had signed off on a \$339-million gutting of the justice system in the province of Ontario under the heading "justice modernization." Of course, because there was such an uproar over all the shootings and deaths in the city of Toronto, the cabinet, the executive council, ultimately rejected those recommendations, which I will remind you once again were signed off by the two justice

ministers in this government. So I think that says a great deal about the reality behind the government's and the Liberal Party's views with respect to how to operate or administer the justice system of the province.

One of the main themes we dealt with during this process was the issue of police investigating police—investigating themselves, primarily. If there's a complaint lodged against a police service or a police officer, a lot of people, I think rightfully so, have had concerns about that particular police service, in effect, investigating themselves. I think we've heard that from a range of people, including Justice LeSage, Alan Borovoy from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, and on and on. The public concern about this issue was recognized by the Police Association of Ontario when Bruce Miller, the executive director of the police association, appeared before us. They all spoke to this issue.

I'll just quote Justice LeSage: "If investigated by the police service affected or by another police service, the police officers assigned to investigate should not have any connection to the incident and be removed from the persons involved in the incident."

I'll put a few more of these quotes on the record as I move forward, but I want to tie this in to a concern with respect to what's happening in this province, what's been happening in this House for the past week and a half now, and that's dealing with the scandal surrounding the lottery corporation in the province.

If you listen to the Premier and the minister responsible for lotteries answering questions in this House, one of the things they talk about—they endorse the Fifth Estate's dealings and the fact that the Fifth Estate revealed this with respect to the Edmonds case, but they only go partway. They say, "Look, we've turned this over to the OPP. We don't have to deal with this anymore."

Well, when they say that, they're ignoring another important element contained within the Fifth Estate report, and that dealt with the role, or possible role, of Chief Superintendent Michael Sharland, who was seconded to the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.—originally with alcohol and gaming, but when Duncan Brown moved from the regulator position to being head of the marketing operations at OLG, he brought Chief Superintendent Sharland with him.

There's a press release dated March 15, CBC News: "Officer Leaves OPP Amid Conflict Questions at OLG."

It says, "The Ontario Provincial Police is reviewing the temporary assignment of a senior officer to the province's lottery corporation after a CBC investigation questioned whether the officer's role at the corporation could have affected a probe into retailer lottery fraud."

"Chief Supt. Michael Sharland, who has worked at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. since 2004, announced late Wednesday his retirement from the OPP to stay on as the company's vice-president of security."

"His departure and the OPP's review come after an investigation by the Fifth Estate ... raised questions about why the OPP had one of its own inside the lottery cor-

poration while the force was probing allegations of lottery fraud by an OLG ticket retailer."

I'll go on with this a little bit later, but I want to go back to some of the quotes. I have one here from Alan Borovoy, of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, when he appeared before the justice committee dealing with Bill 103. The problem with police investigating police is that—I'm quoting Mr. Borovoy—"no matter how fair in fact the handling of any complaint might be, there's no way it can appear fair, because those police officers have departmental interests to protect and collegial relations to maintain." This is the important part of Mr. Borovoy's comment: "This is a classic conflict of interest." I think that's extremely important. We use Mr. Borovoy's testimony when we're trying to support this legislation, but apparently we want to ignore his advice and the advice of Justice LeSage when it comes to a situation dealing with the scandal confronting the Liberal government of the province of Ontario.

When we've raised this issue in the House on a couple of occasions—our leader John Tory has referenced the need for an independent investigation—the Liberal minister and his colleagues shout across the floor that we don't like the OPP, we don't support the OPP, we don't trust the OPP. Of course, I could characterize that as a less than honourable thing to be saying in this place; I could use tougher language than that, and I will if I have to. But it's certainly less than honourable when you look at the support the member for Simcoe North gives to police officers every day that he's in this House representing their interests, and at the history of our party over the years.

This is the way they're attempting—and I guess they're paying Warren Kinsella 1,000 bucks an hour to give them advice on how to damage us and intimidate us in terms of raising these very critically important issues.

Interjection.

Mr. Runciman: Yes. It ain't going to happen. It ain't going to happen, because we have extreme difficulty with the government having a bill before this House, Bill 103, for third reading—and at the end of the day we are probably going to support this legislation; we supported it on second reading. We have reservations. We introduced a significant number of amendments. But the government has a bill before us of which one of the primary themes is that police, especially when you're dealing with senior command officers, do not investigate themselves. It's a blatant conflict of interest, and this government has placed the OPP—an outstanding police service in the world—in an extremely difficult and awkward position by insisting that they investigate an allegation—and I stress, an allegation—and an implication that a senior command officer could have been involved in what has been described as obstruction of justice. It's a Criminal Code offence. They come here every day and try to tell us that we don't like the OPP if we raise this.

Now we find out that perhaps the Premier's office was involved in this, because he wouldn't respond to my

question in the House today. We know that his three key political advisers were at a meeting at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. in terms of how they could discredit these allegations. We know the staff in the minister's office knew about these problems at OLG and retailer theft six months before the Fifth Estate revealed them on television. So this also has clear linkages and lines to the minister's office and perhaps to the Premier's office. And we are to say that this is the sort of thing that the OPP should be forced to be the investigator of? That's not proper. That's not correct.

The conflict grows. How can you justify that at the same time you have a bill before this House saying, "This isn't the thing to do. We don't support this. We don't support police investigating concerns or complaints against senior police officers"? We're talking about, in Mr. Sharland's—and I'm sure he's an honourable gentleman. I don't want to question his integrity, but his name has come up in this and I think it's an allegation that has to be investigated thoroughly. We're talking about the chief superintendent. If you look at the sunshine revelations of salary, he's the second-highest-paid provincial police officer in the province of Ontario. You're saying that an inspector who's quoted in this press release by the CBC, OPP inspector Dave Ross, can go in and determine if the chief superintendent of the OPP is in a conflict or may have been involved in other activities that were not appropriate at the OLG, and that this is the right thing to do?

How does that jive with the legislation that's before us today? How does that make any sense? You're trying to sell us a bill of goods with respect to your honourable motives, in terms of police complaints and how they should be dealt with, but when you're in the House here during question period every day, you're saying, "Oh, it's okay. If it might implicate the government of the day, if it might implicate high-ranking officials in the re-election campaign of the Liberal Party of Ontario, well, then it's okay if police investigate themselves." That just doesn't stand up to scrutiny, and it's not something that we can stand by and allow to occur.

If you look at what happened federally last week with the complaints lodged about senior command officers within the RCMP, what did the federal government do? The next day, the Minister of Public Safety, Mr. Day, had a public press conference and said that he was calling in independent investigators to determine what went on. Calling in independent investigators: That's what our leader, John Tory, has been calling for for a week and a half. If you believe in Bill 103, if you believe in the themes and the principles that we talked about in the development and committee processes, you have to stand up here today and say, "This is wrong. The OPP should not be placed in an untenable position," and that's what you've done to this fine force. This is what you're doing.

I have to say that we have to express our frustrations today and during this debate. There are limited tools available, Mr. Speaker, as you know, to the opposition to express our frustration, our distaste with what's going on

here, with you trying to be high and mighty in terms of this bill but at the same time trying to protect your own tails and those of your highly placed political insiders, instead of doing the right thing and calling in an independent body to conduct this investigation to ensure that it's above board, that there's no perception of conflict of interest.

Based on that—and I will later have some more quotes from testimony at Bill 103 hearings to support what we're saying here today—I have to convey the frustration of the Progressive Conservative caucus and indicate that to drive home that message, at this point I'm moving adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bell rang from 1643 to 1713.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while the table counts you.

Thank you very much. You may sit down.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing.

You may take your seats.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 7; the nays are 25.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for Leeds–Grenville has the floor.

Mr. Runciman: I just want to explain, in case anyone from the viewing public is joining in, what happened here. We're beginning the third reading debate of Bill 103, which deals with the new police complaints process in the province of Ontario. The official opposition, the Progressive Conservative Party, wanted to take what opportunity is available to us—and there are limited opportunities for opposition parties—to express our dismay with the actions of the government with respect to placing this bill before the House, which deals with a very significant issue: the police investigating complaints against police—the same force, the same police service—especially when those allegations or complaints relate to senior command officers.

The irony of this, of course—and I'm using polite language—is that at the same time they're putting this legislation before the House, which talks about how police should be investigated, they are putting the Ontario Provincial Police, an outstanding, world-renowned police service, in an extremely difficult situation by asking them to investigate allegations that include a senior command officer of the OPP, a chief superintendent.

I want to talk about some of the materials that were on the record of the Bill 103 hearings, which I'll reference again, but I also want to talk a bit about The Fifth Estate report which precipitated all of the issues surrounding the lottery corporation scandal. If you look at the situation

and go back to the original Fifth Estate report and Gillian Findlay—who, I gather, is one of the reporters on The Fifth Estate—talking about freedom of information documents and Constable Al Lee of the OPP, who had been investigating Bob Edmonds's contention that he had had a lottery ticket stolen from him by a retail clerk, the transcript suggests that “according to the documents, Lee had been putting together yet another search warrant, this one aimed at the OLG itself. He believed the crown corporation was obstructing his investigation.... Which raises all kinds of questions, not least about that relationship between the OLG and the Ontario Provincial Police. Chief Superintendent Mike Sharland was among those Constable Lee copied on an email giving notice about his warrant.” We can't talk to Constable Lee, since he has been ordered not to talk, and as far as we know, the obstruction allegation was never pursued. That's a point The Fifth Estate has made as well.

Alan Rachlin—again, I think, from The Fifth Estate. I believe this took place in March, a couple of weeks ago, talking about the search warrant that was never exercised: “I don't think you want the OPP investigating that. You want somebody who's independent investigating it. The issue is not necessarily an actual conflict, but the appearance or potential for it.”

Again, this ties in very clearly. I'm trying to make this point to you, Speaker, with respect to the relationship to the bill that is being discussed this evening, Bill 103, and the sort of theme that ran through the development of this legislation. We certainly heard it from community groups and we heard it from others.

I want to put on the record some comments made by the representative of a front-line police service, Bruce Miller, the executive director of the Police Association of Ontario, during testimony before the justice committee. This had to do with independent adjudicators—this was a position supported by the police association—and the need for independent adjudicators when a complaint is filed against a police officer.

1720

Quoting Mr. Bruce Miller of the PAO, “To ensure that a balance is maintained between protecting the interests of the public and police officers, we believe that independent adjudicators should be used.... These independent, professional adjudicators would improve public confidence that discipline matters are receiving due diligence while at the same time assuring police officers that no real or perceived bias exists.... We do believe that independent adjudicators will only add confidence to the system and do away with any real or perceived bias that exists.” That's the executive director of the Police Association of Ontario. They're calling on the government, with respect to Bill 103, to ensure independence when a complaint is lodged against a police officer.

Of course, we're not talking about a front-line police officer; we're talking about the second-highest-paid police command officer in the province of Ontario; we're talking about a chief superintendent who has been drawn into these allegations.

If you take a look at the past history of police complaints, if there has been a complaint—and I think there was a complaint recently up in Mr. Yakabuski's area against either a chief or a deputy chief; I forget, specifically, but it was a senior command officer of a municipal service. Who was called in to take a look at that? It certainly wasn't the force itself.

In this situation, we've asked an inspector in the OPP to come in and investigate the possible involvement of a chief superintendent, one of the most senior ranking officers in the OPP.

I guess this is why we rang the bells initially and why we want to continue expressing our frustration as an opposition party.

I want to explain again to any viewers that we have very few avenues in which to express our dismay with an action or actions that the government may be taking or may not be taking.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): You changed the rules of the House.

Mr. Runciman: All three parties have a responsibility to bear with respect to changing the rules of the House; I agree with the member opposite. All three parties have made these changes while they've served in government.

It's truly regrettable that opportunities for private members—not just opposition members, but all members—have been severely constricted and restricted. So we have to utilize what tools are available to us.

If the government has legislation before this place which we are to consider in a responsible way, and one of the main and primary themes of that legislation is that police should not be investigating complaints against themselves, especially in the senior ranks—that's one of the major driving principles behind this legislation—why in the world would they believe it's appropriate for the OPP to be drawn into an investigation that allegedly involves a chief superintendent of the OPP and which we've learned this week could involve members of the re-election team for the Liberal Party of Ontario, perhaps with direct linkages to the Premier's office itself?

We've heard of staff within the office of the minister responsible for lotteries in the province who had knowledge of these rip-offs occurring six months before the report aired on the CBC. Those clear linkages have, again, further muddied the waters with respect to responsibility.

Again, it begs the question: Why would the government place the OPP in such a difficult, awkward position unless it is with the faint hope, I suppose, that this trusted organization is somehow going to feel intimidated and protect their political hides? That's the only logical conclusion we can come to.

We asked these questions in the House. Our leader, John Tory, has said that this cries out for an independent investigation. We've been ridiculed by the government benches when we've raised this, with them saying that we don't trust the OPP; we're not friends with the OPP.

There are no bigger friends or supporters of front-line police officers in this province than the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, and the record proves it. We'll

stand up to scrutiny against anyone else in this province. For them to suggest that is beyond the pale. It's insulting to all of us. It's certainly insulting to caring Ontarians who watch these proceedings and wonder what this government is doing.

I want to once again draw attention to, which I think is a relevant comparison, what happened last week at the federal level when there were serious allegations made by an officer within the OPP before a Senate committee, I believe, related to pension matters and the management of pensions within the RCMP. The Minister of Public Safety, Stockwell Day, had a press conference following those allegations the very next day and announced that he was calling in an independent investigator to take a look at those allegations involving senior command officers of the RCMP. That's the sort of reaction we should have had from this government, instead of trying to put this behind the covers, hide it behind the curtains, which is typical of every step of the way with respect to this scandal. It hasn't been to try and respond in a positive way to protect consumers across this province. No. It's been an effort to discredit—

Hon. Mr. Peters: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I certainly respect the opinions that the honourable member is putting forward. I don't agree with his assertions. But, Speaker, I'd ask that you rule that he should be speaking to the bill and not speaking in the manner that he has been.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I appreciate the intervention of the Minister of Labour and find that the member is, in fact, addressing the bill with his comments and would ask the member for Leeds–Grenville to continue.

Mr. Runciman: Thank you very much. It's regrettable that the Minister of Labour didn't get that BlackBerry from Don Guy just before he stood up, the head of the re-election campaign.

Interjections.

Mr. Runciman: Mr. Speaker, that unfortunate intervention, I think, is an indication of the discomfort being felt in the Liberal benches with respect to the way this scandal has been handled from day one. I am relating this to Bill 103, because there are clear contradictions with respect to the bill that we dealt with at committee, the primary and driving principle of this Bill 103 being that police do not investigate themselves. If the Minister of Labour doesn't understand that, I will say it once again:

This is a clear conflict, what you're doing with respect to the lottery scandal, with the legislation that we're now debating, Bill 103. One of the primary thrusts of that, one of the key principles of that, is that police do not investigate themselves in terms of very serious allegations, especially when it involves senior command officers. That's why we are protesting.

At the end of the day, we are going to, with some reservations, support the legislation, because if you look at the community and policing organization stakeholders, they are, with some reluctance, supporting it as well. But we have difficulty with allowing this legislation to proceed this evening without expressing our dismay with the way the government is contradicting itself in terms of the lottery scandal and the very high-minded rhetoric with respect to how they're going to change police complaints in this province.

The reality is, they've been trying to hide this lottery scandal behind the curtains. We've got to do what we can to draw attention to it. We've got to do what we can to demand an independent investigation of all of these allegations. Based on that, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Runciman has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1730 to 1800.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by the table staff.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing while you're counted.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 8; the nays are 38.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1801.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown
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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
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Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L) Speaker / Président	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)
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Flamborough-Aldershot		Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
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	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Boutrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est			Marsales, Judy (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)		Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Burlington	Savoline, Joyce (PC)		Milloy, John (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)		
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement	Kitchener-Waterloo	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
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Erie-Lincoln Essex	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Markham	Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Etobicoke Centre Etobicoke-Centre	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports		Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke North Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (IND)
		Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
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Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
		Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)

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Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	North / Thunder Bay–Superior– Nord	
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation		
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Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Toronto–Danforth	Tabuns, Peter (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Parkdale–High Park	DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
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Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 151B

N° 151B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 3 April 2007

Mardi 3 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 avril 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LES ESPÈCES EN VOIE DE DISPARITION

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 28, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 184, An Act to protect species at risk and to make related changes to other Acts / *Projet de loi 184, Loi visant à protéger les espèces en péril et à apporter des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): I'll be sharing my time with the member for Huron—Bruce.

I'm very pleased to speak tonight to Bill 184, An Act to protect species at risk and to make related changes to other acts.

Our government has passed many regulations, many pieces of legislation to make Ontario stronger. We're now among North America's leaders on yet another issue, that of endangered species. Some of the environmental issues we've addressed in the past are implementation of the Walkerton recommendations, source water protection and the Canada-Ontario agreement with respect to the Great Lakes basin and ecosystem. The greenbelt legislation here in Toronto, of course, was a major piece of environmental legislation. We've taken steps to double the installed capacity of renewable energy generation. We've made investments in the development of brownfields, clearing up those environmental problems.

This legislation tonight, the species-at-risk legislation, is very important to Ontarians. Ontario is home to more than 30,000 species, all of which are important to the biological, social and economic vitality of our province. Currently, however, 175 species are identified as being at risk and may disappear from our province altogether. Some of these species include the Atlantic salmon, the peregrine falcon and the flower called bird's-foot violet. Even some of the wildlife I encountered as a boy growing up on a farm along the Ottawa River in Cumberland is now endangered. The butternut was a tree we were very familiar with as kids on our farm in Cumberland. I don't know how the barn owl got named, because I don't

think the habitat was there before the barn owl came along. In any case, I remember the barn owls that we had on our farm. Our grandchildren may never see a butternut tree or hear a barn owl. Some species have already been lost to our province; for example, the passenger pigeon is now extinct.

This government is committed to protecting our provincial wildlife before it disappears. We made the following promise to all Ontarians before we were elected in 2003. At that time, Premier McGuinty said, "We will update and strengthen Ontario's Endangered Species Act. Our new act will put in place effective measures to protect species at risk, including a science-based process to list species and help them recover, and meaningful protection for their habitats. Protection of species is virtually meaningless unless there are also protections for the areas where they live, feed and breed." That's what we promised Ontarians, and that's what we're doing.

1850

It is my pleasure to speak today to Bill 184, our government's proposed Endangered Species Act. This important legislation will overhaul the previous outdated act from 1971 and will institute several significant changes.

The first of those changes is that this bill will use a science-based process to identify and list species at risk. No longer will the welfare of Ontario's endangered wildlife be at the whim of political leaders. Second, this bill will require automatic protection of not just the species identified as endangered but also their habitats. We understand that meaningful habitat protection must also be part of recovering endangered species. Third, this legislation includes stronger enforcement provisions and commitment to species recovery. What's more, this bill will also introduce greater transparency and accountability by requiring public reporting.

Overall, this legislation is part of a three-pronged approach by our government toward the protection and recovery of species at risk. The other two components include better programs and policies to implement this legislation and ensure it is effective, and enhanced stewardship programs. This legislation also addresses voluntary stewardship, because the habitat for many species at risk is found, of course, on private lands. That's why this legislation will provide support incentives to groups and individuals who voluntarily participate in stewardship activities to protect essential habitat and green space. This bill also complements our launching of Ontario's biodiversity strategy and the

actions we're taking to protect 1.8 million acres of green space in the greenbelt, which will provide a safe habitat for 66 of the species at risk.

This bill was developed after extensive consultation with the public and various industries. We heard from aboriginal groups, landowners, environmentalists, rural communities, municipalities, resource industry sectors and many others. We heard their concerns and incorporated their suggestions. This bill recognizes aboriginal treaty rights, and our government is committed to ongoing dialogue with aboriginal communities.

This legislation also incorporates a balance between protection measures and flexibility to accommodate other land use considerations. It recognizes that such flexibility with industrial and business partners can sometimes help achieve the desired outcome of protection and recovery, and better habitat. That flexibility will also help our government to better meet the specific needs of particular species and tailor protection and recovery efforts to individual species and their habitats.

This legislation has already been hailed as an important step forward for Ontario's wildlife. For example, Rob Wright, counsel for the Sierra Club, says, "If passed in its current form—and Ontario deserves no less—this will be the best endangered species law in the country." Aaron Freeman, policy director for Environmental Defence, says, "This is a win-win piece of legislation for the people of Ontario and its wildlife." Here is the first line of a press release from the Save Ontario's Species campaign: "With opposition parties now calling for even more delay, Ontario's leading environmental groups today are underlining the necessity for quick action."

I mention this last quote to highlight why we are replacing the old, politically based process for identifying endangered species with an independent, scientific review committee. It is imperative that political agendas do not interfere with protecting Ontario's environment. It is also important to note that quote because it also brings to mind the impact that human complacency has had on Ontario's wildlife. Actions such as building roads, drainage systems and land development are accelerating habitat change and adding to the stress that is placed on many of Ontario's species. In addition, we all know that humans are in large part responsible for climate change and environmental phenomena, which have a tremendous impact on our wildlife.

Recent news reports have said that a one-degree rise in global temperatures, which is expected by 2020, could cause some amphibians to become extinct and also expose millions of people to water shortages and disease. By 2050, scientists are predicting a two-degree rise in global temperatures, which they say will cause 20% to 30% of the world's species to become extinct. Millions of people may also die from disease, malnutrition, heat waves and floods. Climate change may one day put us all on the endangered species list.

These are all reasons why it is so important to pass this legislation. This bill acknowledges the role that humans play in putting species at risk and enables us to

effectively undertake the necessary measures to prevent further loss to our wildlife. I'm confident that this bill will help save many of Ontario's endangered species while working effectively with our public and private partners to find solutions amenable to everyone.

I'd just like to read from a book, *Rescuing a Planet under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble*, by Lester B. Brown: Just looking at what it takes to put the earth back to where it should be and get rid of all the degradation we've seen, reforestation would cost \$6 billion a year, protecting topsoil on cropland would cost \$24 billion a year, restoring rangelands would cost \$9 billion, stabilizing water tables—a very huge problem; so much of our food is dependent on irrigation water—would cost \$10 billion. Restoring the fisheries—I'd like to read what Margaret Wentz wrote in the *Globe and Mail* today: "We Are Fishing Our Oceans to Death." I'd just like to note a couple of things from there. Just restoring the fisheries would cost \$13 billion on an annual basis. Protecting biological diversity, something this province is very much involved in, would cost \$31 billion a year.

In total, to put the earth back into the shape, to restore our systems, would cost \$93 billion a year—a huge sum. But we can go a little further and look at what we're spending on military budgets. It would take \$93 billion to restore the earth to where it should be on an annual basis. Military budgets: the United States, \$492 billion a year; Russia, \$65 billion; China, \$56 billion; the United Kingdom, \$49 billion—10 countries and almost \$1 trillion a year. So for 10% to 15% of our arms budget—maybe 10% of our arms budget—this planet earth could be put back in the shape it should be.

I'd just like to finish by reading this article by Margaret Wentz. It basically says we're fishing all the large fish, the predators, out of the ocean, and there are other fish that are taking over.

Interjection: The sharks?

Mr. McNeely: The sharks are gone. I'd like to get the figure for how many sharks on an annual basis, and it's just for fin soup; the rest of the shark is dumped overboard. That's a great article that Margaret Wentz has in here today, if you want to read it. It really tells us what we've done. It also refers to what we did with cod fishing in the east. We are not very good at looking after our planet earth, and for a small part of our defence budget we could put this planet back in shape.

This is a step forward in Ontario. It's a very important piece of legislation. I hope that it proceeds very quickly. I commend Minister Ramsay for coming out with this very good legislation. It takes Ontario to the forefront of species protection in Canada.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): Certainly, I want to tell the House that I rise in support of Bill 184. One of the things I want to speak about tonight is, how much has our world changed since 1971? How much time have we lost in protecting—it started in 1971 and should have continued. We've lost three decades.

How many species have we lost in that time? Just to bring this more specifically to the riding of Huron-Bruce,

10 species from my riding are now endangered; to name a few, the spotted turtle, wood turtle, fox snake, queen snake, black tern, cerulean warbler and pitcher's thistle.

We can decide that today we're going forward and bringing a practical application through consultation and working with our many stakeholders. What this bill represents is that process. There has been extensive consultation with our stakeholders, and some of the concerns that were brought forward were the costs. The bill came forward with \$18 million over four years for a stewardship program.

To take it even further, one of the things that I really want to talk about tonight is some work that has happened in my riding without those dollars being there. But that has not stopped our agricultural community from once again leading the way and taking on the stewardship programs.

1900

More specifically, I'm going to talk about my absolute favourite constituent from the riding of Huron-Bruce, my father. One of the things that he has done for the last 50 years is to take his farm and not only make it into a place with walking trails and all of the native species, he's been able to bring them all back. He has also included how to enhance wildlife as well as our waterfowl, as there is a large water area there. Over the years, I have reflected on the work that he has done.

The member from across the way seems to be smiling at this. It's quite interesting that one would have such little respect for a man's work. You may not agree with the work that people have done, but you should respect the work that they've done, in my mind.

Interjection.

Mrs. Mitchell: I didn't say anything.

Interjection.

Mrs. Mitchell: That's right.

I just want to add that one of the things he has given his life for is to make a difference in what we can provide. This bill speaks specifically to giving the flexibility and the enforcement to ensure that there won't be more endangered species going forward, and it talks about understanding that the habitat is part of what we need to protect our species. That is what his life's work has been: protecting the habitat, increasing the habitat, and doing it in a manner that is, I would argue, very much community-oriented and respectful of the industry that's going on in our community.

I know that for the party across the way, whenever we bring forward legislation like this, it's very difficult to support such legislation. I just want to say to the members across the way that as with the Clean Water Act—and I'm confident that the species-at-risk legislation will be supported in the same manner—I've had many debates over the very same issues. There has to be a day when one says, "Today's the day that we're going to make a difference and that we're going to ensure that the future is there for our children," and I believe that what we have and what we have taken for granted—we must ensure that it does have a future. And seeking a

scientific approach and looking at our habitats and coming forward with a stewardship program will go a long way to alleviating the concerns.

One of the other things I want to share with members of the House today: I had the opportunity to speak to a class of grade 11 and 12 students at Kincardine secondary school, and what they chose to talk about—much of the work we've done through legislation, I would say—was what they wanted to see with sustainable development. One of the things the young people talked about with sustainable development was taking into account species at risk, and they talked about stewardship—the stewardship of the land and the stewardship of development. This is a course that the students had developed themselves. What they wanted to see us coming forward with is ensuring that the development we approve is sustainable in the long run. If one does not take into consideration all of the factors such as the water courses and habitat for species and where development would be appropriate and the type of industry allowed—this is what the young students from the Kincardine area were talking about.

One of the other discussions they had that day followed along the agricultural aspect of it and what we can do to make sure that agriculture is also sustainable. I believe that this proposed legislation balances strong protection measures, but also gives a flexibility to encourage greater and more effective stewardship and recovery efforts. We know that over the years the only changes that are supportable are done through stewardship. We've seen that time and time again when we've looked at our watercourses and even our recyclables. We know that the greatest change comes from stewardship because it's a change that the people of Ontario are not only ready to accept, it's a change of their lifestyle, of their habits or of their patterns that happens as well. So that is the change that is the most sustainable and long-lasting and will provide the greatest, I believe, benefit to our species.

Unfortunately I don't have much more time. I have more conservation and stewardship programs that I'd like to talk about, and I know there will be some opposing views. But I would ask the members from across the way that, as one talks about it, one take into consideration what our young people are telling us today. I know sometimes that's not a factor but it needs to be a factor. The discussion, quite frankly, is something they want us to begin, so I encourage you to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member from Ottawa-Orléans and the member from Huron-Bruce on the Endangered Species Act, 2007, Bill 184. The member from Ottawa-Orléans talked about keeping an election promise. Well, he seemed to be waiting to the last minute to make an attempt at keeping this election promise. I would say that every day I seem to be receiving another e-mail or another press release from another organization concerned about this bill and

concerned about having their say on it. So I say to the government that what they're asking for is public consultations, but that doesn't mean delay. Public consultations should help improve this bill. I am more than happy to sit on the committee that would hold public consultations through constituency week or as many Fridays as necessary so that everyone can have their say on this bill. If this bill really is to gold standard as you say, then take it on the road. You should be proud of letting people talk about how good it is or making their concerns known about the bill.

On paper, the bill seems like an improvement: more flexibility, science-based, focused on stewardship. It all sounds good, but there are obviously a lot of concerns out there, so you should listen to the people and the organizations that have those concerns. And don't forget that election promise you made in 2003 to hold public consultations on all significant pieces of legislation. I would say to you that this is a very significant piece of legislation, so please keep that 2003 election promise.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Here we are in the final days of this government and all of a sudden they woke up and found out that they made a promise in the last election, one I would have hoped this government would have kept much, much earlier than where we find ourselves now. So we now have before us Bill 184. I would argue that probably most members have not had a chance to read this in any detail. I understand that if it's not in your critic portfolio, there's so much legislation that it would be fairly difficult to stay on top of it.

The member across the way gave basically a 20-minute speech, split in two, about how great this legislation is. But if you read this legislation, in the end it really doesn't do what you want to do. I want to say categorically up front that we members of the opposition, both within the New Democratic Party and I believe within the Conservative Party, support the principle of being able to move forward on endangered species legislation. We understand, and I understand far too well as a northerner, the importance of doing so. We've seen many examples in southern Ontario and other built-up areas where various species have been put at risk and we have not had the legislation to protect them. I understand that far too well as a northerner because we live in the environment where we're in constant contact with various species. We understand how important it is to protect them. But if you look at the legislation—and I'll get a chance to go through this in debate later—there are a whole bunch of sections in this legislation that basically allow the minister all kinds of wiggle room to do what's going on right now.

Currently, the minister has the right to enact or to not enact the recommendation banning—in regards to an endangered species. This legislation is going to continue that. On page 11 of the bill, if somebody wants to go back and read it, I believe it's under subsection 11(4), there's a whole escape clause that basically says the minister has the right to not enact any of the regulations

in this bill as long as they post on the registry that they're not going to do so. So what's the point?

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Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'm pleased to stand and talk a little bit about what the members for Ottawa–Orléans and Huron–Bruce have put out to the Legislature, because they put this issue in context. More and more, as we learn, finally we're becoming more aware that we are only part of the grand scheme of things and that in fact there is a relationship between various species, various mammals, animals, fowl and fauna, and that we are all part of this. Somehow we have to learn how to protect our environment.

I think what this legislation really says is that it's time we protected our habitats. We've infringed upon them, and ergo we have endangered species by virtue of our movement to continue to eat up wetlands, to continue to eat up forest lands and woodlands. There comes a time, and this is one of the times and moments in which we can do this.

The member for Timmins–James Bay says that this doesn't have enough teeth. When it goes to committee, I hope he makes his point, because I think all of us want to see some teeth in this.

It would be asinine for anybody to put this forward who wasn't sincere about it, and I think most members of the House have a sincere concern about the nature of this legislation and the concept of stewardship, which flies in the face of—I happen to have come from a Christian background, and man has dominion over the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea and all this kind of thing. Well, that attitude is not so good. That's a paraphrase. We think we're the best in the world, that we are the smartest. We are finding out now that we're not so smart, and we had better get in tune with the rest of nature.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): We're here tonight to talk a bit about the endangered species bill, which I think first came around in the 1970s. There's nothing wrong with updating a bill, but the problem we're having again is that this government wants to ram something through, and it's unfortunate.

If they will agree to put it out to public consultation, I think some of us may even be able to support it over here. Who knows? But we'd like to see it sent out for consultation. I just want to look at the people who have written to us and said they want to see the same thing, because you can't just ram things through over there, guys. I mean, you have no experts over there, and you don't want to talk to the experts.

We have the Ontario Forest Industries Association asking for it to go out. We have the Ontario Fur Managers Federation asking for it to go out to consultation, and this is on the road, not just downtown Toronto here. We want it to go all over Ontario. We have Norm Miller here offering to go on that trip, so I think you'd better take him up on it. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture would like to see it go out, the Ontario Water Power Association and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. The Greater Toronto Home Builders' Associa-

tion are on here—that's even downtown Toronto here, folks. The Ontario Mining Association, the Ontario Lumber Manufacturers' Association, and many more would like to see this bill go out on the road for some consultation. Just maybe we can get it right, if this government will listen to the people they're trying to work with. If they don't listen to people and they don't take it out, then I'll have a tough time supporting it the way it is right now. It needs to be out there for consultation.

That's up to the government: If they want to get my support, they're going to have to do that. We have a bit of time here. You have the week off, or you can take it out this summer on Fridays. We do have people who offered to go on that, so hopefully the government listens and takes it out.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Ottawa—Orléans, who has two minutes to respond if he wishes to do so.

Mr. McNeely: I'd like to thank the member from Parry Sound. I'd just like to say that he said it's a very busy four years of environmental legislation from this government. This is a very important piece of that which is coming in our fourth year and we're very proud of it.

The member for James Bay: Again, we're moving this forward as part of a four-year plan. It's very important that it does get through. There has been lots of consultation on it and there has been support throughout.

Certainly, the implementation can be made in ways that can deal with the ramifications. It's extremely important legislation. We see what we're doing to our natural environment. We see what we're doing to endangered species. It's time to act, and I think that's the way we're going with this piece of legislation. It's not ramming the legislation through. The consultation has been there. Some people will not listen, but I'm sure with the stewardship dollars that are involved and with the people with private property, there are going to be ways of working with the Ministry of Natural Resources in making sure that this legislation protects the species, protects the property rights and builds a better Ontario.

We're doing this in our fourth year as part of a huge package, including 1.6 million acres of green space in Toronto, which is extremely important, which is milestone legislation. We had it in Ottawa with the Gréber report in 1948, I believe, that greenbelt. Well, it's in Toronto, 1.6 million acres. With many pieces of new legislation, including this legislation, we are going to have a stronger Ontario and we will be dealing with people in a very fair way.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford): I'm pleased to join in the debate tonight. I think it's pretty clear that all three parties are on the same page here in terms of updating the 1971 statute, because it needs to be updated. I don't think there's any disagreement on that.

There are some issues, obviously, that are a part of this process. That's why we're debating this bill at second reading. That's why we have the minister here to get that type of information. We also have public hearings and I know this bill is going to go to public hearings. It has to go to public hearings, and the government knows that. So after this bill is passed at second reading—and I'm sure it will be—it will be going out for public hearings. The only issue is how broad those public hearings will be and how long they will be. There is no doubt that this is a bill that is going to be a fundamental change in the way Ontario approaches this issue.

I was reading an article today by Murray Campbell, his Queen's Park column in the *Globe and Mail*, and he says, talking about Bill 184, because that's what we're debating here tonight, "The bill changes Ontario's approach to protecting endangered species. Under the current 1971 law, no species is protected until the government decides to do so, which is a cumbersome process. Just 42 species have been granted protection but more than 175 plants and animals are deemed to be at risk of disappearing. The new law, using a 'presumption of protection' rule, stipulates that all species that have been scientifically assessed as being at risk would get automatic protection." I think the key here is the presumption of protection rule, which stipulates that there is a scientific basis for that protection.

The critic for this is Norm Miller. He's the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, from the PC Party. He indicates in this article that the Progressive Conservative Party will support Bill 184 but wants "full and public consultation to correct its flaws." That's the official position of the Progressive Conservative Party of this province in terms of Bill 184.

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To bring to the audience's attention the level of discomfort with respect to stakeholders on this particular bill in terms of the way the government is approaching this issue, I've had very detailed discussions with Mr. Miller, our Parry Sound—Muskoka member, in terms of giving him my guidance in where we should be going on this bill, and he was kind enough tonight to provide me a letter that was dated April 2, 2007. It is signed by Doug Reycraft, president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. He sent this letter to the Premier and the Minister of Natural Resources, David Ramsay. It reads as follows:

"The Association of Municipalities of Ontario's board of directors met on March 30, 2007, where Bill 184 was discussed at length following a presentation by the staff from the Ministry of Natural Resources. While the government's objectives of environmental and species stewardship are important, many concerns were expressed regarding the proposed legislation, including concerns about mitigating potential economic impacts on communities where agricultural and resource industries are key to economic sustainability.

"Further concerns were expressed and assurance was sought in respect to municipal decision-making under the

Planning Act and whether or not this proposed legislation would supersede what is currently in place. There is a bevy of legislation that affects land, such as the Mining Act, and some such as the Clean Water Act that contain supersedence provisions.

"The management of land and related processes of the province is becoming more and more complex and without integration and coordination at the province. For these very serious reasons, AMO respectfully requests that the government conduct further discussions with municipal governments and key stakeholders before the bill is referred to a standing committee for consultation. This additional step of discussion with stakeholders would provide the government with an opportunity to better understand the concerns that are emerging and provide communities with an opportunity to learn more about the government's policy objectives. Good public policy would be better served by some additional time. This step can also be used to inform standing committee discussions when they occur at a later date. This is of the utmost importance to many of our members.

"AMO strongly encourages you to urgently consider our proposal for further discussion before proceeding with the next step in the legislative process."

This letter, from the president of AMO, was cc-ed also to John Tory, official opposition, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.

The bill, which changes the existing Endangered Species Act, is very clear in terms of what it's trying to accomplish. Our position, the PC Party's position—and I've had extensive consultations with the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka on this—is that we want to see the act updated. We also want public consultations across Ontario to ensure that we get it right. The Liberals' cuts to the MNR budget throw into question the ministry's ability to effectively protect endangered species. It also begs the question, do the Liberals take this issue seriously? I think what the member is referring to is that in their March 22 budget, their fourth budget, the Liberals cut the Ministry of Natural Resources budget by \$36 million. The MNR, as we know, is already struggling with budgetary constraints, and this will further compound those problems. What's at stake here, this issue which was put forth in the letter from the president of AMO, is the people who are going to be affected by this, and what is the government really doing with this so-called "stewardship program," which is under section 16 of the act. It says:

"The Minister may enter into agreements for the purpose of assisting in the protection or recovery of a species specified in the agreement that is listed on the Species at Risk in Ontario List....

"(2) An agreement under subsection (1) may, for a purpose referred to in that subsection, authorize a party to the agreement to engage in an activity specified in the agreement that would otherwise be prohibited by section 9 or 10....

"(3) An authorization described in subsection (2) does not apply unless the party to the agreement who seeks to

rely on the authorization complies with any requirements imposed on the party by the agreement."

This stewardship approach is designed, I take it, to provide some protection to people who are impacted by this bill but the government really hasn't allocated many funds, if at all. I understand from my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka that accompanying the new regulations of the stewardship fund, the species at risk in Ontario stewardship program, which is meant to support the preservation and rehabilitation of habitat, implementation of recovery strategies, public education and outreach and other activities to assist in protection, the McGuinty Liberals have set aside \$18 million over three years. That is not going to be enough, and everybody knows that, especially when you've just cut the budget \$36 million for the MNR.

Back to the consultation issue, which my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka has been very firm about in terms of the need for that and his availability, which is commendable. We have another news release that I want to read. This comes from a number of groups and is entitled "Provincial Species at Risk Act Ignores Federal Audit Recommendations"—that's the federal government:

"Resource groups across Ontario are warning that the provincial Liberal government is carelessly fast-tracking endangered species legislation that it knows will be a bureaucratic nightmare, expensive to implement and unlikely to result in the recovery of species at risk. In doing so, they are poised to duplicate mistakes made by the Chrétien government by ignoring the results of an independent audit of the national Species at Risk Act, also known as SARA. The significant findings of the audit appear not to have informed the development of the provincial legislation despite years of experience with the federal act. This is compounded by the apparent failure to provide the Minister of Natural Resources with a copy of the audit, by a failure to share the audit with major stakeholders and by the very fact that it was the stakeholders themselves who unearthed the audit.

"The independent audit, conducted by Stratos Inc. for the federal Department of the Environment, criticized the federal government for passing a bill that is chronically underfunded, overly prescriptive and badly misdirected. By emulating the federal act, the province is set to compound federal mistakes using the same flawed principles identified by the audit, and magnifying these mistakes by adding additional layers to their legislation.

"Other flaws identified in the federal legislation include insufficient science and monitoring, significant delays in developing policy to support implementation of the act, limited aboriginal involvement, a lack of awareness of species at risk by key operational staff and managers, and a critical lack of funding. By failing to correct federal mistakes, adding additional requirements not covered by SARA, and failing to listen concerns raised by their major stakeholders in all resource sectors, the province is setting itself up for failure.

"From 2000 through 2005, the federal government spent over \$200 million on their national strategy on

species at risk. The recent budget added an additional \$110 million over two years, but the total funding is still less than 60% of the minimum needed by the core departments. In contrast, the province only allocated \$4.5 million per year for the next four years in support of the 184 species named under the act.

"As a result of the audit, the federal government has acted to address the recommendations. Key among their responses is an acknowledgement that the species-by-species approach must be changed to incorporate a systemic ecosystem approach in that recovery planning process. Despite this, the province has failed to consider the findings and the federal response into their planning process, threatening to replicate mistakes already made and identified."

So the questions remain. Why has the McGuinty government ignored the conclusions and recommendations of the independent audit of SARA? Why won't the McGuinty government stop trying to ram through the legislation instead of slowing down the process and listening to the constructive suggestions for change from major stakeholders through extensive consultation and a full slate of committee hearings? Why is the McGuinty government ignoring numerous municipalities that are demanding that the legislation be stopped until they have been consulted?

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That, in a nutshell, is the problem with this government's approach. There's no problem with what the principles are, what's trying to be attained here. The problem they've got here is that they have not developed that scientific basis to develop the species at risk. That's number one. Number two, they have not provided the funding that's necessary to accomplish the task at hand. Number three, they are not consulting with the stakeholders and the public with respect to what needs to be done to make sure this bill does what it says it's going to do.

Now, that's very worrisome because, as I have extensively discussed my views on this bill with the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, and his views, there are some major challenges with respect to this—

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): What about the Barrie Colts? Are the Barrie Colts on the list?

Mr. Tascona: The member from Peterborough, who knows something about hockey, just wants me to mention that the Barrie Colts are playing the Sudbury Wolves on Thursday in the semifinals. Peterborough didn't make the playoffs this year, but maybe better luck next year.

Now, the 2006 audit of the federal SARA program found this, and this is very important: that practitioners are unable to apply habitat criteria consistently or scientifically on federal lands. There is a vacuum of contemporary species-relevant information and data with which to make an informed decision. Provinces are withholding information about critical habitat on private lands until issues of compensation and protection are resolved. This is serious, serious information.

The following are just some of the revealing findings of a June 2006 evidence-based independent audit and formation evaluation of the federal species-at-risk program compiled through 74 interviews with federal employees and key stakeholders, and there are a lot of problems here in terms of what they're trying to do. So there's a problem at the federal level not only in the fact that they don't have the science to do what they say they're going to do; the other part of it, as we heard already, is that they're not funding it properly to make sure that it can be accomplished.

So I appreciate the work that the critic for our party has done on this. He has done a lot of work on this. He's prepared to go to consultations throughout the province, at times that I think are amenable to dealing with this bill in a constructive and productive way, but it's up to the government to really make sure that this bill is going to work. After all, they have the majority. They have waited almost to the end of their mandate to address this, knowing fully well that a lot of this is strictly going to be smoke and mirrors, because if they don't get the bill right, what have they accomplished? They have basically put species at risk as opposed to solving the problem.

Looking at this bill, there are other comments that I want to share with the listening public tonight. There are some non-supportive stakeholder comments, and I want to just read these.

This is from Jamie Lim of the OFIA, a March 26 media release: "It is absolutely essential that the Ontario public be meaningfully engaged in the review and improvement of this legislation."

Paul Norris of the Ontario Waterpower Association, a March 26 media release: "'If the past is any indication, the new legislation will be with us for decades,' offered Paul Norris, president of the Ontario Waterpower Association. 'Given that reality, it is more important to get this legislation right than it is to get it right now.'"

There are other comments about this bill, but I think the bottom line is that the public is slowly awakening to what the government is doing here, and as they awaken, they want to make sure—because the public does believe in the environment and the protection of our species, just like the PC Party of Ontario believes—that they get it right. If this government is determined to ram this through—the timing of it is obviously conducive to trying to get the public's attention away from the OLG scandal which is going on right now, and some of the breaking news today about the OPP setting up an independent audit through the Toronto Police Association to deal with their dealings with the OLG. It's a very serious situation, and for the government not to be reacting to that particular problem is very disappointing.

But to deal with this particular bill, Bill 184—we're at second reading; we're having debate. There's going to be a free flow of ideas. Though all the parties are onside, it's the process that we're talking about and living up to the blueprint of what the government is trying to do with respect to this particular bill. Of course, the opposition parties are going to hold their feet to the fire to make sure

they get it right. That's what we're here for. There shouldn't be any finger-pointing in terms of what we're here to do.

On that note, I conclude my comments and I look forward to some responsive remarks from the member to my left, Gilles Bisson, the member from Timmins-James Bay, and across the way on this matter.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bisson: I certainly didn't want to disappoint my friend and colleague by not commenting on his dissertation in regard to this particular issue.

I want to repeat something he said at the beginning of this because I think it needs to be said for the debate: Everybody's on the same page here. Nobody in this House is saying that we do not need to do more in order to protect endangered species in this province. That is not the debate here. The question is, is this bill going to do it to the degree that we want, and will it be done in such a way that we don't get tied up in all kinds of bureaucratic red tape that, in the end, doesn't get us to where we want to go?

Part of the problem here is that the government, like other governments—this one probably more so than others—says that it undertook a consultation. Their method of consultation was that the minister went out and talked to a few people. I'm going to talk about this a little bit later in the debate, but nobody has really had an opportunity to look at the final bill to decide, does the bill in fact do what it is that we want, and if not, how can we strengthen it and make sure that it does what we intended it to do in the first place?

I would propose that a bill like this, the way you should do it—because they are technical bills. I repeat: Not many members have had a chance to read this. I've read it as the critic and I've come up with probably about 10 amendments just looking at it. Based on what I've seen, the bill will not do what the government says it's going to do. I've found at least 10 places in the bill where you've got problems with the way the bill is drafted.

I would argue that what the government should have done is brought this in a lot earlier than in the ninth hour of their government's time in office and probably referred it out after first reading, or at the very least brought this thing here last fall. We could have gone out in the intersession for a week or two and consulted those people who are interested in this bill and come back with further amendments. Instead, they come here at the last minute and say, "We've got to rush this bill through," and they're trying to pass it in a rushed way. And what we're going to end up with is a flawed bill, I warn you.

Mr. David Oraziatti (Sault Ste. Marie): It's a pleasure to provide comments here in response to the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford's remarks.

There are just a couple of things I want to touch on. First of all, consultation: Consultation is certainly taking place in the province of Ontario with respect to this piece of legislation. We began our consultation almost a year ago in May. We've consulted widely with key landowners, conservation organizations, aboriginal commun-

ities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and the public through newspaper ads and the Environmental Bill of Rights registry. There's been specific aboriginal consultation. Back on May 10, 2006, MNR sent an invitation to all First Nations to provide input. There's quite a lengthy list of First Nations organizations that were asked to provide consultation. So the consultation is ongoing.

We on this side of the House want to get the bill right. The reality is that the NDP had five years to update this bill and the Conservatives had eight years to update this bill, and neither of them attempted to do anything to improve the Endangered Species Act. We've got 42 on a list of 176 that are endangered. How many grew on to this list on your watch? We're trying to address this issue.

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I also want to address the MNR issue in terms of the budget. The budget under our government has gone from \$541 million to \$726 million. Just this year alone there was an increase of \$44 million to the budget at MNR, representing about a 6.5% increase. Over the term of our government, MNR's budget increased by about \$185 million—very positive news for the people of Ontario.

We need to move forward on Bill 184. It has been 36 years, since 1971, that this has not been updated. We need do this now so that we don't lose more species in our province.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean-Carleton): I'm very happy to be following the member from Sault Ste. Marie, just to give him a little fact check. The budget he was so glowing about a few seconds ago wasn't that overwhelmingly supported by the people of Nepean-Carleton, who got slashed and burned yet again by this government, with the Ministry of Agriculture—by the way, the farmers in our province are going to be impacted by this bill.

He also started talking about previous administrations and how much time they had to perfect this bill. I was on Parliament Hill for the many years that this Liberal government and their little cronies on Parliament Hill were unprepared to put forward a piece of species-at-risk legislation. It took them three times before they were even able to get it done. Here we are today, in 2007, and this McGuinty Liberal government, three and a half years after it took office, is now prepared to put forward a piece of legislation that has been inadequately consulted on. The unfortunate thing is that we probably have six to eight weeks left in this Legislature. Right now, there's a large shroud of controversy with this government, of course. We just found out that the OPP is preparing to investigate them for corruption in the OLG, and we're supposed to be focusing on species at risk with an inadequate bill.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm from Nepean-Carleton, which is in the southwest end of Ottawa, but I'm going to quote Thunder Bay mayor Lynn Peterson, who says, "No one is saying that we shouldn't be taking action"—I agree—"to address species at risk. But we

want to make absolutely certain that we get this legislation right.

"It's going to be with us for years to come and we shouldn't be rushing headlong into it if we don't know what the effects may be."

That's exactly why, under Chrétien and Martin, they had to reintroduce the bill three times. I was a Progressive Conservative, working for John Herron at the time, when you continued to introduce the bills and they continued to die on the order paper, because you really don't care.

Mr. Leal: I did listen very intently to my good friend the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. Obviously, as a Peterborough Petes fan, I want to get on the record that after the next series, the Barrie Colts will indeed be an endangered species, and I certainly hope that this act will be proclaimed so that we can protect the Barrie Colts.

Getting back to the relevant issue here, I heard my good friend the member from Lanark—she's from the Ottawa area—talk about endangered species. I know that John Baird, who has five green suits in his clothes closet that he pulls out every day, will take the initiative and follow through for the province of Ontario and maybe look at improving the endangered species act for the national government. I know that my friend here will be very supportive when the man with the new green suit takes the time to introduce the legislation.

This is an important piece of legislation. It's about our heritage and about our future. When you take the time to look at Al Gore's movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, about climate change, and take the opportunity to read his book on the same issue, which I think should be mandatory in every elementary school across the province to study, you know that Mother Earth is changing quite rapidly. It's incumbent upon the people who sit in this Legislature today to take steps to preserve our species and bring about protection from climate change so that future generations will be able to say that Ontario is a great place to live, work and play.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

Mr. Tascona: I'd like to respond to the four members who had the courage to make comments here tonight. Looking at the member for Timmins-James Bay, I appreciate his comments. We're all on the same page here; there's no doubt.

The member from Sault Ste. Marie says, "We're consulting." The question we're hearing here is, "Are you listening?" It does not appear that they're listening, because we're getting incredible feedback from stakeholders in terms of this situation. You can consult all you want; if you're not going to listen, it's not consultation.

The MNR budget was cut \$36 million in this year's budget, which says it all with respect to what this government thinks. We call the Liberal Party "the paper environmentalists."

The member from Nepean-Carleton, as usual, is very focused, very to the point, and correct. I don't know what else she can say. She is right with respect to what's going on here with respect to the Liberal government's approach to the environment. This is a last-minute approach in our last session saying, "Let's get this bill through. Let's go get it."

That leaves me with the member from Peterborough. What can I say? The Peterborough Petes were eliminated from the playoffs and he was making those comments about the Barrie Colts. But it's not a laughing matter because I think the Colts are going to go all the way this year in the Memorial Cup.

I'm less confident about what this bill is going to do, whether it's going to go all the way in terms of protecting endangered species, because there's a lack of scientific information, as we know from the federal level; there's a lack of funding at the provincial level; and this government is not listening to the public. That's why there is growing upset.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bisson: I want to say, straight up at the beginning of my time in debate in this legislation—and I want to say it again so there is no misunderstanding whatsoever—that there is nobody in this House, I believe, including myself or anybody in my caucus, who is opposed to drafting legislation that will, in the end, do what it is that the government is asking this legislation to do. Our difficulty is that the government has drafted a bill that has some problems.

I know what they're going to do. They're going to come to us in the ninth hour. This government is at the end of its mandate. It didn't choose to do this in year one; didn't choose to do this in year two; didn't choose to do this in year three. They've chosen to do this in year three and three-quarters. So there we are, with probably about four or five weeks of legislative time left before the next provincial election, and the government comes running into the House and says, "Oh, we made a promise in the last election, my God, and we've got to keep it. Here's a bill." Then they say, "Everybody in the public, just accept it, because we've made a promise and we've got to keep it." I'm saying that I want to help you keep your promise because I think it's a promise that was made that was important, and God knows you've broken enough promises, and anything that I can do and my good friend the member from Ottawa can do to help you keep your promises—we're with you.

Ms. MacLeod: We're with you.

Mr. Bisson: But the problem here is that the legislation has some problems. So I want to put one thing on the record first. The way that legislation like this should be done should be through a proper legislative process where the public have an opportunity to comment on legislation that is actually drafted. Here's the problem. I heard members from the government side get up and say, "Oh, we did so much consultation. Oh, my God. Let me read you the list of how big it was. We talked to these people and we talked to those people and somebody had

a conversation with somebody else, and a letter was sent out by the Ministry of Natural Resources.” A couple of problems: First of all, many of the people you say were consulted are sending me letters saying they weren’t, and I’ll go through those a little bit later. But the problem is that people were being consulted on the general principle. If I call anybody in Timmins–James Bay or Beaches–East—not Beaches–East York—

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Bisson: —Toronto–Danforth or in Windsor and I say, “Hi; I’m MNR. Would you like to have some endangered species legislation?” of course everybody’s going to say yes. We’re all on the same page. Did anybody take the time to give individuals in the public who know something about this the actual mechanism by which we’re going to protect endangered species? No. The first time we had seen this bill was when the minister walked into the House last week and tabled it in the Legislature for debate, and there’s the problem. What I’m saying is that you’ve done this kind of backwards. What you should have done—and you had time to do it—was introduce this bill way before the ninth hour in your time in government. You’ve got four weeks, five weeks tops, of legislative time. I’m seeing 10 fingers now, but we’ll see if that actually happens. But the point is that you have very little actual legislative time to be able to deal with a bill like this. It is a substantive bill and a very technical bill. I know because I’ve been around here long enough, like many of you, what a technical bill is. This is one of those, and we need to make sure that we get it right.

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What you should have done—I want to start off this debate—was introduce this, at the very latest, by last fall. Then we could have had a proper second reading debate, three or four days—we didn’t need much, because I think what needs to be said here in the chamber is fairly straightforward—and then allowed the bill to be in committee in the fall and travel a bit last winter. We could have come back here this spring. We could have had a bill amended, and we could have passed a bill that does what the government wants it to do and what the members of the opposition want it to do by this spring. No. Government instead says, “We’ve got our own method of consultation, and that is, dial the ministry at 1-800 and we’ll let you know what we’re doing next week.” People really didn’t get a chance to look at this in any technical detail. Yes, some did. There are certain groups within the environmental community and others who had a chance to look at the basic principles based on discussion papers that were out there, but the actual legislation has not been out there for people to take a look.

I want to say first of all on the consultation issue, I’ve gotten all kinds of letters from First Nations and others, from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, from the Ontario Forestry Association, from numerous—and I’ve got to say “numerous”—First Nations tribal councils and others in PTOs, who said they’ve really not

had a chance, for the most part, to be able to talk to the government about any of this.

I’ve got a letter here signed by Mike Carpenter, the chief of Attawapiskat. He says that the director of lands, who is in this case Suzanne Barnes, who works for the Attawapiskat First Nation, got one of those letters from the MNR that the member across the way talked about, saying, “We’re looking at doing species-at-risk legislation.” This person from Attawapiskat contacted the MNR and said, “Please come and talk to us. We’d love to sit down and talk to you about this.” And nothing has happened since. The only thing there was was a contact, but there was no reciprocal meeting when it was requested by the First Nation.

And Mike Carpenter, the chief of Attawapiskat writes in a letter dated April 2, 2007: “On our behalf, she invited MNR staff to come and talk to the community and elders about the rare species legislation, but they never accepted our invitation.”

I have had similar letters from other communities. Whitewater Lake First Nation writes to us on March 27: “To date we have not heard about any consultations with Ministry of Natural Resources regarding Bill 184”—in this case, they didn’t know anything about it; nobody has ever even contacted them—“and this issue never even came up during any recent meetings we had with them. If there were consultations going on, they had many opportunities to inform us and we believe this bill could definitely impact First Nations in many areas.” So here’s Whitewater First Nation basically saying, “We’ve had all kinds of meetings with MNR, and never at any time, in any of the meetings we had with MNR, did somebody raise this whole issue of species-at-risk legislation.

You then have another letter from Wapekeka First Nation. This is the typical story that happens to First Nations. I know it’s happened in Winisk, Peawanuck First Nation and the creation of Polar Bear Provincial Park. It’s happened with the waterway provincial park here at Wapekeka. I believe it has also happened at Muskrat Dam and a whole bunch of other First Nations, where the province goes out, creates a park, and you know what? They don’t even bother telling the First Nation when they’re inside the park, and all of a sudden, their traditional access to the land is curbed because a park is created and they lose traditional access to the land.

In this particular case, Wapekeka is saying that they were not contacted. They didn’t get a chance to have input. And what they’re worried about, as many other First Nations are, is that in the end you will end up creating legislation that will restrict their traditional access to land and they won’t have a thing to say about it. Now, I am going to give the government a little bit of credit, because there are sections in the act that attempt to give First Nation some way of protection. I see that in the legislation, but the problem is, as I read the legislation, it really doesn’t go there. What you would have had to have is some sort of non-derogation clause that says, “There is

no way that this legislation will impact on a First Nation's ability to have traditional access to lands."

We've got letters, in this particular case, from the Independent First Nations Alliance, and I believe they're out of Big Trout Lake—or actually out of Sioux Lookout, but they represent Big Trout Lake. Here is a letter, dated April 3, that says, "I have received no communication on the bill from Minister Ramsay. Normally, something of this magnitude would be faxed to our office. Additionally, nothing has been mentioned during the northern table discussions that I have attended." This is Mary Bea Kenny, who is the environment and land use adviser for the First Nation. "I am quite disturbed by the claims of 'exhaustive consultation' because nothing has come through our tribal council office requesting consultation on legislation for species at risk."

This is the tribal council. These are the people who represent many communities. It's not that you just didn't contact and consult First Nations individually; you didn't even talk to the tribal councils. I know, from talking to other tribal councils in northern Ontario, that it's much the same story. So from First Nations' perspective, you need to understand what their concern is. They don't want, all of a sudden, to be restricted from having traditional access to their lands. They are safekeepers of the land; they have been for millennia; they will continue to do so.

They understand the importance of protecting species. They are about harvesting within a sustainable limit. First Nations understand that, at the core of who they are. But what this legislation could end up doing is saying to a First Nation, "You no longer have access to your traditional lands because we've designated that habitat, which happens to be part of your traditional territory, under this legislation." Quite frankly, we should not be going down that road.

The other thing I want to say in regard to some of the technical parts of this bill is, if you read the enactment sections of the bill—and I know my friend Mr. Tabuns is going to speak to that later. People want to have clarity. People who are interested in this issue—and, I would say, there are many of us when it comes to making sure that we protect species and habitats at risk—want to have clarity that when this legislation is passed there's going to be a clear enactment date and that the regulations will be done by a certain time.

You go through sections 6, 7 and 8 of this legislation. It is the most convoluted writing that I've ever seen around enactment. I've seen legislation in this House for some 17 years now, and this is one of the most convoluted enactment sections that I've ever seen. There are all kinds of steps and all kinds of exemptions on when you don't have to do it. There's enough wiggle room in this thing that the minister can take an entire Mack truck and drive it through backwards, sideways and any way he or she would want in order to not enact sections of this bill.

The enactment sections on their own, put short and sweet, give the minister the ability not to enact many

parts of this legislation. For example, there is what I call the escape clause, and I just want to find it. Here we are. This is a beaut; this is really a beaut. This is subsection 11(4), and I'm going to read this:

"Subsection (3) does not apply to a strategy if, before the time limit set out in subsection (3) expires, the minister publishes a notice on the environmental registry established...."—and it goes on. It says in this section—and I'm not going to read it because I don't have enough time; I would have to read a whole bunch of paragraphs here. What it says is this: There have to be regulations drafted on each of the endangered species that are listed in this bill to determine how we're going to protect that species. I agree that that's a good thing. I think, rather than having a one-size-fits-all for all kinds of species by way of protection—that wouldn't make sense. So what the bill tries to do—and I agree with this concept—is to develop a regulation specific to the species we're trying to protect. But what this says in subsection (4) is that if the regulation isn't done by the time the enactment section of the bill says that it should be enacted, which is about five years, all the minister has to do in order to comply with the bill and not have the regulation done is to post that he's not doing so on the environmental registry under the Environmental Bill of Rights.

You've got a piece of legislation here where we're trying to protect species and habitats that are specified in this bill. The minister has a process by which the people who are charged with writing the regulations and giving the information on how to do so have to have regulations written for each specific type of species that is protected by the act within a five-year period. But at the end of five years, if the minister says, "Oh, well, we don't have enough money in the MNR budget to do this on time, so therefore we're not going to do it," or another government comes in or the same government gets elected and says, "We're not interested in this anymore. It's after election time. We don't have to worry about the votes of the people of Ontario on this one," and they decide for whatever reason not to enact the regulation that'll protect a certain species, the minister doesn't have to, because the bill basically gives the Minister of Natural Resources the ability to post on the Environmental Registry that they're not doing so and why, and the whole enactment section is basically null and void. So I say that the bill does not protect species in the way that the government says it will.

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That brings me back to my point. We agree—my friend Peter Tabuns, who I've had many discussions with, my leader, Howard Hampton, and all of us in the New Democratic Party—that we need to have species-at-risk legislation, and we certainly would love to help you get there. But what I'm worried about is that you're going to play a game here and you're going to try to portray the opposition as dragging their feet and not wanting this bill to pass, saying, "We have to have public hearings during constituency week. It's the only time we can do it." I want to say to the people watching that the

government can have public hearings any time it wants. It doesn't have to do it during constituency week. Quite frankly, the reason we have constituency week is for members to get back to their ridings so they can go out and do the things that we have to do, because we're stuck here at Queen's Park four and five days a week. So I just say that if the government wants to bring this bill forward and give it some committee time, that's not a problem; we're all for that. But there's plenty of time to do that outside of constituency week, so let not the government play that game.

The other thing in this bill which is interesting is the section on warrants. I know what the government is trying to do here, and I understand. We want to give enforcement officers the ability to go on to a property or into a building if there is reason to believe—and I've got to say good reason—that there is a species at risk and there's something going on within that property to cause that risk to happen, and the minister has to give, in this legislation, the ability for a justice of the peace to issue a warrant for search and seizure. I understand that. The problem is that when you read this particular legislation, it's one of the heaviest-handed pieces on warrants that I've seen in a long time. What it says is that you have to go to a justice of the peace in order to get a warrant to go and search and seize; fine, not a problem. That's the way it should be. The ministry or whoever the agent is who's wanting to inspect should put their case before a JP so that they don't intrude on somebody's right to privacy. But there's another section in here, under further warrants, subsection 23(4). It basically says that an enforcement officer may enter and inspect any land or other place without a warrant if he or she believes there's something going on.

I don't want to speak badly of inspectors, but it could happen—I think it's a possibility; we're all human—that an inspector is given an improper tip or is led astray and all of a sudden rushes onto a person's property and says, "To heck with it. I'm not going to go out and get a warrant," for whatever reason, and infringes on a person's right to privacy. I think we've got to be really careful about that. Yes, we've got to give the crown the ability to search if we believe there's a problem, but you can't give inspectors or game wardens the ability to go out and inspect without going through a justice of the peace. I think there has to be due process. Yes, there will be times when we think that whatever is happening is happening now and we've got to move, but the way that this legislation is written goes far beyond that.

That brings me to the next point, and that is the issue of who in the end is going to be responsible for enforcing this legislation. Here is probably the bigger problem: If we even pass this legislation in the form that it should be—this bill will get passed. I want everybody to know, at least in its present form, that this bill will be passed before the House rises. The question is, will we have the bill that we want? So let's be very clear: This bill will pass. But here's the problem: Even if we pass the bill that we need—and I would argue this thing is not what we

need—we don't have the money at MNR to make this happen. The budget of the MNR was cut last year. It's been cut severely over the last number of years, and we don't have the capacity within the MNR for enforcement officers or conservation officers, as they're called, to go out and do their job. It's so bad that the workers across this province with OPSEU, the people who represent the enforcement officers, have been holding bake sales to raise money to buy gas to put in the trucks of conservation officers so they can go out on patrol in the bush. There's no longer the amount of enforcement we used to have, because MNR doesn't have the money to put the gas in the truck to allow the people who do the enforcement to do their jobs. It would be like saying to the OPP, "Well, you know what, officers? It's a darned shame that people are speeding on our highways, but we don't have the money today so that you can go out and do your job, patrol our highways and catch speeders. So we'll make it 1-800, report yourself if you're speeding," and somehow or other this is going to fix the problem. My point is that if you're going to have legislation like this, the MNR has to have the capacity to enforce the legislation, and you can only do that if you have proper staffing and the support for staffing. If we're asking enforcement officers to do something in this Legislature, I think it's only right that we give them the ability to do it.

I didn't get a chance to get into this, but the other problem we have is that there's already currently legislation in this province that deals with some of these issues. For example, under the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, forestry companies are, by law, obligated to do forest management plans. Those forest plans are living and breathing documents that are always amended according to current technologies. Part of what they have to do as they're going out to harvest in the forest is make sure they don't impact on any natural habitat that would endanger species. So if there are woodland caribou, moose, owls, mink or whatever there might be, the forest company has to take that into account in its forest management plan and has to show how they're not going to negatively affect those animals in the bush that they're going to come in contact with.

This legislation can throw that out the door, and all the work we do, which is really good work, and our forest management plans may become null and void. That is another reason I believe this bill needs to be looked at seriously, so that we can look at how we make sure that this bill, in the end, does what it is that we want it to do: first of all, that it protects species in the way that is right and, at the end of the day, does it in a way that doesn't become either unable to be enforced because we don't have the capacity to do so or written in such a way that contradicts the very aim of the bill.

I want to thank members for this time in debate and look forward to comments you may have on my little presentation here tonight.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr. Oraziotti: It's a pleasure to provide some comments on the remarks of the member from Timmins—

James Bay. A couple of things: First of all, the MNR budget has not been cut. It has been increased by \$185 million from 2003—

Interjections.

Mr. Oraziotti: Come on over here and look at the chart on the MNR budget from the ministry. Right here: \$541 million, 2003-04; today, \$726 million.

I don't understand why the members opposite can't handle good news. The NDP cut the budget \$178 million during their term in office. The Conservatives cut the budget 45% while they were in government. What we've continued to do is move forward with all types of positive environmental legislation and legislation under the Ministry of Natural Resources that will continue to improve the province of Ontario.

When it comes to First Nations consultation under this bill, May 10, 2006, MNR mailed an invitation to all of the First Nations who would be involved in this, and on September 15, 2006, they set up 10 meetings to be held with First Nations throughout the province, and I can read those groups off: Fort Severn First Nation, the Sandy Lake First Nation, Sachigo First Nation, Kee-Way-Win First Nation, Poplar Hill First Nation, Deer Lake First Nation, Pikangikum First Nation—perhaps this will ring a bell for the member from Timmins—James Bay—North Spirit Lake First Nation, Cat Lake First Nation, Fort Hope First Nation, Webequie First Nation, Summer Beaver First Nation, Whitewater Lake First Nation, Northern Chiefs tribal organization, Matawa Chiefs Council, Windigo Tribal Council and the Nishnawbe Aski First Nation. The consultation goes on and on.

The bill is 36 years old. It needs to be updated. I would like to know from the members opposite how many species were added to the endangered species list on their watch. It's time to fix the problem.

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Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'd like to respond to the member for Timmins—James Bay. There's nobody in this House who doesn't support legislation that would protect endangered species. That's the first thing. I can't imagine anyone who would stand by and let any species disappear. What he was saying is that there simply is not the money to enforce this.

I heard the comments of the member for Sault Ste. Marie—I guess he's the parliamentary assistant or has some title with the government. Quite frankly, we don't believe a word you say anymore. Your conduct in this House in the last two weeks has been absolutely disgraceful.

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: I would like to ask the member from Sault Ste. Marie to visit the Midhurst office of the Ministry of Natural Resources. It's absolutely disgraceful how they've whittled it down. There's nothing left of that office. He is absolutely correct: They're having bake sales. The conservation clubs etc. are raising money to put gasoline in the trucks of the conservation officers, and they're standing there bragging, actually thinking they're doing something to help the Ministry of Natural

Resources. There may be money going into the Ministry of Natural Resources, but it's all going into fancy brochures and Liberal propaganda, like we've seen with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of Health. All of these ministries have fancy brochures, glossy brochures telling how wonderful things are. That's where the money is going. It's not going into helping services in the communities; it's not going into helping real conservation officers protect endangered species. They can speak all they want about all the money they're pumping into the system, but it's going into communications and PR, not into real services that will help the endangered species of the province of Ontario.

I would like him to visit the Ministry of Natural Resources office in Midhurst and tell me that that's a real functioning government office. You have completely destroyed it.

Mr. Tabuns: It's my pleasure to comment on the remarks made by my colleague from Timmins—James Bay.

No one thinks that the old legislation for the protection of endangered species was adequate. I think there is a consensus in this House and in society that effective endangered species legislation is required; it needs to be updated. But we do face substantial problems with a lack of funding for the ministry that's actually supposed to deliver. If you look at the budget—\$762 million in the last budget year, \$726 million allocated in this budget year—I don't know about your math, Mr. Parliamentary Assistant, but that strikes me as a decline in funds allocated.

I have been north of Kingston, I have been in other parts of rural Ontario where people see declines in parks staff and declines in support for the services they need and that this province needs for protection of its natural resources. So I have to ask: Even if this legislation was written perfectly—and there are substantial problems; not problems that will stop it from being passed but problems that would stop it from being effective—if you don't have the dollars, if you don't allocate the resources, then you are not going to have the impact that needs to be achieved. You are not going to have that impact.

Unfortunately, this bill is not perfect, and in my comments I'll get a chance to go over some of the areas where there are clear flaws. My colleague touched on some of those, and I think the one that's most startling to me is the power of the minister at any time to essentially override and disregard the legislation that's before us. So I ask, what is the purpose for this legislation?

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): You know, sometimes we accuse the opposition of not being able to take yes for an answer. What I want to talk about tonight is something pretty wonderful that's happening. I heard the member for Timmins—James Bay say that this legislation will pass. I heard the member for Simcoe North say there's no one not supporting this legislation. I heard the member for Toronto—Danforth say there's a consensus in this House. We're making a lot of

noise and yelling a lot about something over which there seems to be general support. I just want to say that I'm really happy that all of us are putting partisanship aside, at least a little bit, to work together to work together to make this legislation among the strongest species-at-risk legislation in North America. Together we are setting a benchmark for the protection and recovery of species at risk, and this is truly the beginning of a new era of heritage protection in our province. So rather than getting carried away about the process and about refinements, all of which are important and all of which we should be discussing, I would like to take my little couple of minutes to say "excellent work," to congratulate the minister for having the determination and the foresight and the vision to bring forward this very important piece of legislation.

You know, we live our lives and we're not always aware of the tremendous biodiversity in this province. We go through our lives and we just don't notice these things. But taken in its whole, we are not doing our job as stewards of our land, and I think this is a big step forward, so to all members I say thank you.

The Acting Speaker: I'll return now to the member for Timmins—James Bay, who has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bisson: I want to thank all the members for having responded to my comments on this particular speech. We do know how to take yes for an answer; the problem is that we're trying to get you to do what you said you would do in the first place. You promised in the last election as the Liberal Party that you would bring endangered species legislation in, species-at-risk legislation, and that you would actually protect those species. We're saying that if that's your intent, bravo. First of all, why did it take you three and a half years to do it? You're rushing this at the end of the process, and the legislation is flawed. I know that Mr. Tabuns, the member from Toronto—Danforth, is going to get a chance to speak to this later, but there's an escape clause in this bill that allows the minister to exempt anything he wants whenever he wants. So don't come into this House and say, "Bravo, Minister, for being enlightened." It's not very enlightened if you put something in there that has an escape clause as big as what we have in this particular legislation.

I also say, in regards to the budget of the MNR, I don't know, I guess I'm making this stuff up because I read it out of the 2007 budget document that is basically put out by Mr. Greg Sorbara, Minister of Finance, province of Ontario. It says here on page 175, ministère des Richesses naturelles—because I have the French copy; I imagine the English one is the same, but maybe you got a different copy and, if so, that's a whole other issue—that in 2006-07 we spent \$762 million. We plan on spending \$726 million in 2007-08, which is less than \$762 million. So I don't know. It must be me making it up because certainly, you know, Mr. Sorbara probably made this up when he put it in the budget and it's a fiction of every-

body's imagination. But the budget at the MNR has been decreased or this document is wrong.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's great to join this debate tonight to do with Bill 184, to protect endangered species.

I've been here since we came back, and I heard the other members from both sides question the fact of consultation, no consultation, the math. I just want to take a minute—I mean, the member just read from the budget, and he's quite right: Those numbers are correct. But he should read a little bit more. Some of the money was one-time money because of extraordinary fires—

Mr. Bisson: Oh, we're not going to have fires this year?

Mr. Rinaldi: There are fires. Let me tell you, back before my days here, this province experienced an unfortunate incident, SARS, under their watch. They spent \$1 billion on that, and they did a great job; they did a good job. All I'm saying is that the next year I didn't see the \$1 billion added to health. Does that mean the health budget was cut? So all I'm saying is that they spent \$1 billion—well spent, I must say—to protect the people of Ontario. They did a great job. But they didn't include that \$1 million in the budget. I tell you that those folks are using Tory math. They should use proper math.

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Interjection.

Mr. Rinaldi: Yes, the Magna budget. They're using Tory math.

When Mr. Tory was in my riding, he commented on wait times for cataracts at Northumberland's hospital. He could not compare because under their watch there were no cataracts. It's one of the lowest wait times for cataracts in the province of Ontario. He didn't know that but he told the people of my riding that the hospital wasn't doing a good job. So they'd better get some math lessons before they tell us what to do.

I want to talk about the consultation process. When I hear that there's no consultation, I think the minister made it very clear that there is going to be consultation. Do you know why they say there is going to be no consultation? Because they're not used to consultation. Under their regime, there was no consultation. Since that party was in power, three and half years went by, and now there is consultation. We are going to have consultation so that we won't have that happen again.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: If you could just take your seat for a moment, I'd ask the House to come to order.

I'll return to the member for Northumberland.

Mr. Rinaldi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to talk about the bill. It has been a long time since this legislation has been updated. Other governments—and I know they had busy agendas—maybe just didn't get to it. I guess that raises questions when we get criticized for bringing it in at the last minute, but we're doing it. They just cannot believe that. They could have done it at the last minute and the people of Ontario would

have been happy as long as it got done. But they didn't do it. So we are doing it within our mandate and it's going to happen.

I'll tell you why it's going to happen. It's going to happen because of people that this government consulted prior to it, and we're going to consult again after second reading. We're going to have consultations. Let me tell you some of the comments of the people we consulted with before the legislation. I'm going to read them for the record.

"Conservation Ontario commends the government of Ontario for undertaking a review of the Endangered Species Act which will result in improved protection for species at risk. The province led a very inclusive consultation process during the review and the conservation authorities were pleased to participate." Do you know who said that? It was Richard Hibma, chair of Conservation Ontario.

Let me tell you who else we consulted with. "The new Endangered Species Act is a significant step forward for Ontarians and the natural heritage we all value so highly. This new legislation will provide an inclusive, science-based and effective framework within which to balance different environmental and economic priorities." That was Dr. Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence.

We have experts at the table, these folks we talked about. Let me pick another one here just to make sure that we understand that we talked to people who have an interest in this issue, and maybe that's who those folks on the other side need to talk to.

"This new legislation brings Ontario's protection for endangered plants and animals into the 21st century. The package of incentives and programs will ensure that private landowners, who are responsible for the majority of rare habitats, are valued partners in the delivery of endangered species protection." This is a quote from Wendy Francis, director of conservation and science, Ontario Nature.

I could go on and on quoting these things. But I just want to touch on another base that our friend from Timmins-James Bay commented on: "This is great. We're going to support it, but there's a glitch. There is no funding for it."

Interjection: It's not true.

Mr. Rinaldi: You're right, it's not true, because in the budget this year, the one that they claim was cut was increased by 6.45%, by \$44 million. Let me tell you what part of that increase will help us do. It will help us provide \$18 million over four years to promote stewardship activities, protecting essential habitat and green space.

So we're dealing with the legislation. We're going to pass this legislation because it's the right thing to do, and we put our money where our mouth is to back it up: \$18 million worth over four years. I know that's hard for those folks across the way who don't quite have a concept of numbers. They're really having a hard time,

because it's the right thing to do. But I tell you, we are moving in the right direction. This is long overdue.

I'm sure that after we debate here in the House and it goes to committee, we're going to get lots of input from a lot of interest groups in the province of Ontario. I know there are a lot of groups out there that want to get involved and want to help our government make sure that we have the right legislation out there to protect our species, our environment. As I learned in the last three and a half years, after those consultations sometimes there are a lot of amendments and sometimes there are not very many. But it's the right thing to do to make sure that we have a well-balanced piece of legislation. I know that when we were briefed by the Minister of Natural Resources—in a lot of cases of endangered species, although we need to protect them, some are becoming extinct. So we're able to make sure of those species, even if they have to be relocated to an adjacent piece of land or habitat, so that proper development could occur and our economy moves forward.

When we package all this together, yes, it has taken a little bit of time; we've been in government for three and a half years, but from all accounts we've dealt with a lot of very important legislation in this House. This is just another one of those things that are going to complete the package we proposed to the people of Ontario. It's the right thing to do. It deals with our environment, it deals with endangered species and it's something that's been neglected for a long time.

I neglected to say at the beginning of my speech that I was going to share my 20 minutes with my seatmate, my friend from London-Fanshawe. I know that he wants to add to this. Even folks in urban centres like London have an interest in this.

I want to take the opportunity to thank the folks here for listening. Please, let's get this moved forward.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): First, I want to thank my seatmate, the member from Northumberland, for the details in his speech and his passion about this issue. Of course, I want to speak in support of Bill 184, to protect endangered species.

The member was talking about many different issues. As human beings, I guess we become greedy, to some degree. We want to control the whole earth, the whole of the environment. We want to build highways, we want to build roads, we want to build buildings. We don't leave anything for other species that share this life with us.

Interjection: Mother Earth.

Mr. Ramal: Mother Earth. We have to protect it. We have to create an environment to allow others besides ourselves to live on this globe. It's an important issue.

We on this side of the House, the government, are not just thinking about building homes, schools, hospitals and infrastructure. We also have to protect the future of nature. I want to commend the Minister of Natural Resources for his great job and his effort to maintain our province green by creating the greenbelt, which I guess is the biggest in history, not just in Canada but on the whole earth.

Interjection: Yes, 1.8 million acres.

Mr. Ramal: How many acres?

Interjection: It's 1.8 million.

2030

Mr. Ramal: It's huge, Mr. Speaker, just a very good indication of our direction and our determination to protect the environment, to create a green zone for our generations in the future.

Interjection: It's a legacy.

Mr. Ramal: It's a legacy, of course, 100%. The member from Peterborough is a great advocate on behalf of his riding and also on behalf of nature and protecting species in the province of Ontario.

I think this issue is very important. I listened to many speakers who spoke before. I know the opposition—the Conservatives and the NDP—still have a doubt about our commitment to this file. I think that introducing this bill at this time is a great indication of our commitment to protect the environment, to protect our species, because we have to continue no matter what. People think, "Look, it's at the end of your mandate that you're doing it, that you brought it to the Legislature to deal with it." We don't care. We are here to serve till the last minute. We're going to get it done because we promised to do it, and we're going to do it. I know the Minister of Natural Resources' commitment, especially in this budget: two million trees to be planted across the province of Ontario. Last year he gave us 5,000, and we planted them in many different areas in London, in conjunction with, and with the support of, the Scouts, and the green earth people of London. Many different people came to help us plant those trees, because it's very, very important to protect our environment.

I want to tell you this story. I have a conservation area beside my office. It divides Adelaide North from Adelaide South. In that spot, we have a pond, a lot of trees and a lot of endangered species, and I think great numbers of my constituents work very hard to protect it and not allow connection of the street, because if we connect it, we're going to lose the pond and we're going to lose some birds, which won't exist anymore. It's a beautiful area, and this area will remain a place for many of my constituents to take their dogs for a walk and to enjoy nature. It's a beautiful area. This is part of our commitment to support those activities, not just in London—Fanshawe, not just in the London area in general, but everywhere in the province of Ontario.

I know that some people think this is a light issue, that it's not an important issue, but it is important, as well as health care, education and infrastructure, because as human beings we are in charge of the whole of nature; we're in charge of the whole province. We have to take care of every element of our province, because in the end, as many of my colleagues mentioned, it affects us all. All the species—it doesn't matter if we like them or not—play a pivotal role in cleaning the area, in cleaning the environment, and in the cycle of life. If we start eliminating this kind and the other kind, we are going to be in danger in the future.

I know that many spoke before me, and I was listening to them. They thought this was not going to see the light; it's going to be jammed through, with no consultation. I was listening to the member from Sault Ste. Marie, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources. He's a great member, a very active member, and he gave me enough information about this issue. There was a wide consultation that went before this bill to construct its direction, because it's important. As my seatmate, the member from Northumberland, mentioned, we consulted experts in that field—professors and doctors and activists in that area—to enlighten us, to tell us what we were supposed to do.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): We wanted to get it right.

Mr. Ramal: It's very important to ask specialists in this area in order to have a good bill, because we want to get it right, as my friend the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough mentioned. It's very important.

I know the member opposite was talking about this issue. Hopefully, when she gets the chance, she can tell us what she thinks about it. Hopefully, she can stand up and support this initiative, because it's an important initiative. I know that many people think, "Why are we talking about species here? Why don't we talk about different issues? Why don't we talk about health care? Why don't we talk about education?" I know we're doing a great job on those files. I think we are under control by investing more money in education, investing more money in post-secondary education, investing more money in infrastructure, investing more money in our children, because we believe strongly that all elements of our society have to work together to create a strong province.

In the meantime, we have to pay attention to our environment, we have to pay attention to our species, which are something beautiful. When we open a geography book about nature and the natural resources of our province, we see a lot of beautiful species flying, walking, giving us beautiful images. Our job is to protect them. Our job is to create a good environment to host them and also nurture them. And we—

Interjection.

Mr. Ramal: You're right: It's very good for the habitat. The member from Peterborough is always a great supporter of this issue and always advocating on behalf of this, because he lives in a beautiful area. He has a great interest in not polluting his lakes and his forests, because they all play a pivotal role in our life to give us clean air and a beautiful environment. It's our job to keep protecting them.

This is an important bill, as many people mentioned. This bill is going to a committee, to travel the province of Ontario. We're going to listen to different people: the farmer, the experts, the opposition—people who like it and people who don't like it. We are willing to listen to them; we are willing to learn more, because we want to get it right. It's important to get it right by going to committee, by consulting other people, by listening to other people. It's the right thing to do. That's what we do

on this side of the House. Whatever bill we propose, we don't just bring it to the House and debate it a little bit and force the vote. No. We take it to committee; we take it on the road. We listen to people from the north, from the west, from the east, from Toronto—from any area—and then we come back with good information and pass it, if it gets support from the majority of the House.

I think it is a great bill. I want to thank the Minister of Natural Resources again for his leadership in this area, and all the people working in his ministry to create such an important direction to protect our species that are endangered. I think it's our duty, our responsibility as a government, to keep working with all the people to create protection mechanisms. It's important because in the future, when our kids grow up, we want to have a future for them. We don't want to just read in a book that we had a certain kind of fish or a certain kind dog or certain kinds of flies or whatever. They have to see it too. Exactly as we're enjoying it, they have to enjoy it in the future.

Mr. Rinaldi: We'll make it better.

Mr. Ramal: We'll make it better. We can enhance it. By not protecting it, we're going to create just history, where they go to a book and, "Yeah, we had a butterfly that we used to enjoy in this area. Now we don't have it anymore because we killed it."

Mr. Leal: You'll have to see it on Discovery TV, right? You haven't experienced it.

Mr. Ramal: Right. Life experience: This is a very important thing. The intent of the bill is to maintain it for the present and for our future generations to come. It's important, as a government, to take the direction, to take leadership, and create whatever mechanism to protect endangered species and make a good environment for them to grow and nurture, and not kill them, by eliminating all the obstacles that destroy these species. I think it's a good bill. That's why I'm speaking in its support.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. MacLeod: Few things in this Legislature make me smile more than the members for Northumberland and London—Fanshawe, particularly when they have to split their time in a 20-minute interval on a piece of contentious legislation that every member of this Legislature should be taking a very big interest in. They talk about the interest in this bill at this time and all the consultation. Of course, we've seen the lack of interest on their side when they can't finish 20 minutes.

I want to talk a little bit about the vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Paul Misteale, who said, "A fast-track approach to this legislation will not give us the ability to inform and involve the thousands of farmers who may be affected. It is imperative that the government put the emphasis on engagement, not expedience." Yet this is exactly what we're seeing on the other side of the Legislature.

I also want to talk a little bit about funding. Earlier, my good friend from Timmins—James Bay was talking about the massive cuts in the Ministry of Natural Resources, which we're seeing in everyone's riding right

across the province, although they'll tell you that this year there's a four-points bulletin: There will be no forest fires. The McGuinty government proclaimed that earlier tonight. But we, on this side of the House, are not going to proclaim that. In fact, they haven't really fully understood the nature of the bill they've put before us. Not even SARA, the federal species-at-risk legislation—during the 2006 audit of the federal Species at Risk Act, the \$200 million the federal government is putting in is not doing the job.

The Ministry of Natural Resources fish and wildlife division in the province of Ontario needs another \$35 million each year just to get by, yet this year their budget was cut. Did I mention that this bill before us is inadequately funded? All we are looking at is \$4.5 million, a pittance, for species at risk. You should be ashamed. You should all be standing up and taking part in this debate. This is not agreement; this is debate.

2040

Mr. Tabuns: The members from Northumberland and London—Fanshawe have spoken in favour of this bill. The member from London North Centre said there is consensus in the House; virtually, why are we even debating?

The simple reality is that for those who care that we actually protect our species, there is concern that an act be adequate, that resources be provided, that it be written in a way that will ensure it will deliver the goods and be put forward politically in a way that will have support in the population.

I'm very disturbed around the question of First Nations consultation. I'm not saying that because I think the bill should be derailed. I'm saying that because First Nations are generally ignored, and because I went through this on the Clean Water Act and talked to First Nations who had not been consulted about the Clean Water Act. That is a fundamental problem, and at some point it will come back to bite this government and bite this particular Legislature.

When we want to pass legislation that has the necessary impact, we have to develop discussions with those affected parties that have constitutional rights. So don't undermine legislation that you believe is necessary, that you believe has to come forward, by neglecting substantial pieces.

As the member from Timmins—James Bay said, this bill is going to pass—the governing party has a majority in the House. We know that we need new endangered species legislation, but don't do stuff that undermines the foundation for actually protecting those species. Don't put things in the act, or fail to put things in the act, that ensure that actual delivery is not going to be as advertised.

Mr. Oraziotti: It's a pleasure to respond to some of the very positive comments by the members from Northumberland and London—Fanshawe, a couple of excellent members in this Legislature; we're very pleased to have them here.

I need to set the record straight yet again. The Ministry of Natural Resources budget has gone from \$541 million in 2003-04 to \$726 million for 2007-08.

Any discrepancy in the budget book that has been mentioned by the opposition, they clearly know, deals with outstanding expenses such as forest firefighting—one-time dollars. They know they're misleading Ontarians by suggesting there was a cut to the Ministry of Natural Resources budget. The budget has gone up by \$44 million, 6.5%, this year alone.

This is a fantastic bill. It's supported by Ontarians across the province. Nineteen seventy-one was the last time this bill was updated. It's 36 years old. There are only 42 species that are protected out of 176 currently endangered species. I'd like to ask the opposition parties tonight, how many species had to be added to this list on your watch while you dithered and did nothing to update this legislation?

If we have consensus, let's move forward. Let's stop the posturing, the political rhetoric and move along with this bill, because we know it's a good bill for Ontarians. This is not much different from other aspects of protection for endangered species under the Forestry Act, the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, the Places to Grow Act and the greenbelt legislation. There's a host of legislation in this province that this legislation will help to codify and ensure that we take important steps forward in protecting endangered species in the province of Ontario.

I want to commend the Minister of Natural Resources for his leadership on this issue. Consultation will continue. We want to make sure we get this bill right. We're proud to move forward with it.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise to make a few comments on the comments from the members for London—Fanshawe and Northumberland.

I think we said earlier, and I think most of the members in our caucus at least agree, following the leadership shown by Premier Bill Davis 30 years ago, we understand there's a need to update the legislation, and we fully support that. What we're saying is you have to have the resources behind it.

I mentioned earlier the Midhurst station of the Ministry of Natural Resources. It has basically been disassembled under this government. They may talk about all the money that's flowing, but I tell you, you know where it's flowing? It's coming in the form of fancy brochures, glossy brochures, fancy communications, fancy press releases. Take this thing: Strong Rural Communities, update 2007, from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. What kind of a joke is this supposed to be? It actually says the farmers are happy in here. The farmers aren't happy with this government.

Then there's this thing here called the Monitor, Ontario Health Quality Council. That went out to every home in Ontario. It's Liberal propaganda; that's all it is. They can't even get their logos right. On one, of course, they have the old logo, and then on the health quality council one, they have that new Mickey Mouse one that they spent \$2 million or \$3 million redeveloping.

All I'm saying is, if you're going to have species-at-risk legislation, you have to have the resources to follow it, and \$18 million over four years is a complete joke. It's going to cost \$163 million to clean up Lake Simcoe alone, and that's the aquatic end of it. They haven't even talked about the aquatic end of it. They're talking about a penguin or a red-winged blackbird or something like that. They're not talking about fish at all, which will cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: Who knows what they call it? Who knows what they actually mean over there? No one believes a word they say. It's all a joke over there; it's all a joke.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the government side and recognize the member for Northumberland, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Rinaldi: I'm encouraged, after I heard comments from the members for Nepean—Carleton, Toronto—Danforth, Sault Ste. Marie and Simcoe North, that they all agree that this legislation needs to go through.

The member for Simcoe North is right, because since Bill Davis, they did nothing. He's right. Since Bill Davis, that government did nothing. So I'm happy to follow in Mr. Davis's footsteps.

Interjections.

Mr. Rinaldi: We touched a nerve, we really touched a nerve. Under Bill Davis, they got things done; under their government, they got nothing done. I'm delighted to hear that they're going to support it, because it's a good bill.

The member from Simcoe North says there's nothing here for Lake Simcoe. Lake Simcoe is a mess. Why is it a mess? Because they did nothing.

The member for Nepean—Carleton talks about me and my neighbour sharing time. To us, that's consultation. That's participating in a debate.

I think the Minister of Natural Resources took his time and did the right thing. We've got this piece of legislation. We've consulted, and we're going to keep on consulting. It's really tough for the members of the opposition to agree with something that's good. They are really struggling, we can tell, but I guess that's their job.

I know we are doing the right thing. We are going to pass this legislation, and the nature of Ontario is going to be a lot better for it down the road.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I listened very carefully. I would only hope that you will be able to rein in the rantings of the opposition.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. That was not a point of order, but I appreciate it nonetheless.

2050

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant): I'm happy to speak to Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act. I would like to touch on a few things: the need for public hearings, the track record of the PC government in the past, property rights, the ALUS program, and the Carolinian area down in my neck of the woods.

As a member of the PC caucus, as a landowner, as a former teacher of environmental science, I unabashedly support the protection of Ontario's natural environment and those inhabitants therein. I think it's very important to make it known that the PC caucus supports the protection of endangered species, and much of this was articulated in the excellent lead speech from our MNR critic, Norm Miller.

However, equally, we support the creation of the best legislation possible. That's why we're calling for full, open, extensive public hearings. It doesn't matter to me whether they're on Fridays or during constituency week or over the course of the coming summer. As we've heard this evening, it was a PC government, over 30 years ago, that first introduced legislation protecting endangered species, and our commitment remains steadfast. That's why it's so important to get this legislation right.

My approach is to ensure that a balance is struck between protecting species, while respecting property rights and ensuring that any changes do not put an undue burden on any person or group in Ontario. Farmers and rural communities have a strong historic role as stewards and protectors of natural resources. As legislators, we must ensure that plant, bird and animal species are protected through co-operation with landowners, rather than heavy-handed prosecution or enforcement measures; I certainly don't want to see that coming forward in either this proposed bill or in any regulation. Rural residents should not be expected to shoulder the entire burden for the intent of this bill without the support of society at large, and given Premier McGuinty's past history of placing huge responsibilities and liabilities on rural people without adequate assistance—we saw this with source water protection; we saw this with greenbelt legislation—we're very concerned about any aspect of that in this legislation.

So we need a co-operative approach. We have to start working with those people who can provide that co-operation by offering incentives rather than any punitive approaches.

I think it was last year that I proposed a litmus test or a standardized way to evaluate legislation like this. We have to ask ourselves a few questions:

(1) Will this legislation adequately accomplish its stated intentions?

(2) Is this legislation the fairest it can be for stakeholders?

(3) Have those stakeholders been properly consulted to bring in their perspective?

If the answer is no to any of these questions, it's back to the drawing board, because it's so important to get this done properly, not necessarily to get it done quickly.

We know the stated intentions of this proposed law: (1) to identify species at risk based on the best available scientific information, including information obtained from community knowledge and aboriginal traditional knowledge; (2) to protect species that are at risk in their habitats; (3) to promote the recovery of species that are at risk.

So, going back to that litmus test, will it accomplish the goals? I can say tentatively that it may be successful. Is it the fairest approach? Maybe it will be if we give stakeholders an opportunity to let us know what they need in this particular bill. I do hope this government has fulsome public hearings; I've seen little indication of that as yet.

That's why I think that we need to be cautious before moving forward. Stakeholder input is key if we're going to get this one right. I hope this government will show a true desire to hear from farmers, from outdoorsmen, from rural landowners, from foresters. Take this to their backyards as opposed to what we've had to date with respect to debating it here in the House.

As we know, we've heard from a number of groups, a variety of groups who want to see public consultations. Resource groups, for example, across Ontario have provided us with a warning. This is in a media release from April 3, signed by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Fur Managers Federation, the Ontario Forest Industries Association, the Ontario Mining Association and the Ontario Waterpower Association. The warning is that, "The provincial Liberal government is carelessly fast-tracking endangered species legislation that it knows will be a bureaucratic nightmare, expensive to implement and unlikely to result in the recovery of species at risk. In doing so they are poised to duplicate mistakes made by the Chrétien government by ignoring the results of an independent audit of the national Species at Risk Act.

"The independent audit, conducted by Stratos Inc. for the federal Department of the Environment, criticized the federal government for passing a bill that is chronically underfunded, overly prescriptive and badly misdirected. By emulating the federal act, the province is set to compound federal mistakes, using the same flawed principles identified by the audit and magnifying these mistakes by adding additional layers to their legislation."

Consultations don't have to mean a delay in passing this legislation. They can be arranged—we know that in this House—in northwestern Ontario, obviously, north-eastern Ontario, eastern Ontario, the GTA, and southwestern Ontario. We would be pleased to co-operate and facilitate these consultations. The way can then be cleared for any amendments in committee.

Murray Ferguson, in the March 30 edition of the Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal, said, "Habitat needed for protection of a species is not well-defined in this legislation, nor is the economic and social impact of habitat protection considered in listing of a new endangered species or providing more protection for one currently on the endangered list." He goes on to point out that the legislation, "assigns 'an extreme amount of power' to an appointed scientific panel...." So in that newspaper, the Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal, it points out that municipal leaders, business, agriculture, and non-governmental associations are also calling for this government to take a sober second look at this piece of legislation.

I have the privilege of representing one of the most ecologically diverse regions of Ontario—North America, for that matter. It's also probably the most diverse riding in Ontario as far as agriculture. I'm referring to our section of the Carolinian zone, that zone south of an imaginary line from Grand Bend to Toronto, oftentimes referred to as the banana belt. The moderate climate in this area and in my riding of Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant: Why is it part of the Carolinian zone? It's largely in my area due to the influence of Lake Erie. It stores heat in the summer and releases it in the winter.

As many will know, the Carolinian zone boasts a greater biodiversity of flora and fauna than any other ecosystem found anywhere in Canada. There's an estimated 2,200 species of herbaceous plants, including 64 fern, at least 110 species of grasses, 130 sedges, 70 species of trees. Many reptiles and amphibians make their home in this Carolinian zone. I'll list a few: the eastern spiny soft-shell turtle, the eastern fox snake, the queen snake, the Fowler's toad, and the eastern hog-nosed snake. We always refer to that as the puff adder. I know many years ago we caught one. It got loose in the car and about a month later—my mother was driving, actually—it crawled out from under the dashboard. Everyone was well, including the snake.

There are 400 species of birds in the Carolinian zone. That's more than half the species in Canada. One third of the species at risk found in Canada are associated with this Carolinian zone, and 65% of Ontario's rare plants are found in that region, plants including pawpaw, blue ash, flowering dogwood—something well-known in Norfolk county—the Kentucky coffee tree, yellow mandarin, swamp rose mallow, the eastern prickly pear cactus and the tulip tree. There's a very large tulip tree at the top of the hill at Normandale. I always make a point to take a look at that tree when I drive up that hill.

2100

Rare birds found in the Carolinian zone: The Acadian flycatcher, the tufted titmouse—one of my favourite terms—the Louisiana waterthrush, the prothonotary and the hooded warbler.

Two weekends ago, our local Long Point foundation auctioned off a Robert Bateman, an artist's proof of a prothonotary warbler. It was actually purchased by my father. I'm going to mention his name—I know someone's father was mentioned earlier this evening—Harry B. Barrett, someone who has dedicated his life to date, essentially, to conservation and habitat restoration. This fundraising group, the Long Point foundation, does point out, as part of their vision, that private landowners are doing their part by conserving habitats and rare species on their own properties. Conservation within this Carolinian zone depends on the commitment of both public and private interests. Again, much of the land is private land, apart from, say, in my area, the St. Williams Crown

Forest. Most of it is not crown land and hence it's so important to work with private landowners and to be proactive; certainly not to be punitive.

Within our area, I think of the flying squirrel. I know we used to have flying squirrels in our woods. I have not seen any. I haven't read anything in this legislation—I believe it was last year that we heard about the increased funding for research on the sexual habits of the flying squirrel. As I recall, Dalton McGuinty squirreled away about \$150,000 on that one last year. It was about this time last year.

Within the Carolinian zone, within the riding of Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, we have the forest cover of Six Nations. You can see that from satellite images: the marshes at the lower Grand River; the Long Point marshes, of course; and Backus woods, 651 acres set aside on the Norfolk sand plain, all of which support a constellation, a true diversity of flora and fauna. Within that Backus woods—if you'll bear with me, I'll go through another list: the hooded merganser, the pileated woodpecker, the barren owl, which are primarily northern species which mingle with southern species in this very large tract of bush. They mingle with species like the Acadian flycatcher; the yellow-billed cuckoo; Dalton McGuinty's flying squirrels, as I mentioned; the eastern hog-nosed snake—that's the puff adder I was talking about; and the southern woodland katydid, a species I had actually never heard of until I did a bit of research on this.

In essence, the Backus woods alone—it's only 600 acres, the equivalent of a section, if you were out west—is unique, because that northern boundary of unique species overlaps with the southern boundary, and hence we have dramatic biodiversity within that relatively small area.

Last Saturday afternoon, I attended my niece's wedding. She got married in Backus woods. On this side of the House, the NDP were calling for hearings. Why not a day of public hearings in Backus woods? The facilities are there. Or just downstream, down Dedrick Creek, we could go to Bird Studies Canada in Port Rowan at Long Point. As far as hearings, that's my offer. That's what I'd like to put on the table for that part of southern Ontario.

I'd like to make mention of a bit of Ontario's Living Legacy, truly a legacy of the previous government. It reflected a commitment to protecting natural resources, protecting habitat and parks, and it was a reflection of the very clear commitment to public consultation. Those hearings covered northern Ontario, north-central Ontario—very significant citizen participation in that public consultation process.

In May 2000, I recall questioning the Minister of Natural Resources about progress at that point with respect to Ontario's Living Legacy, and I pointed out at that time that the Living Legacy strategy was the greatest increase in the history of Ontario's system of parks and protected areas. I pointed out something that's common knowledge today, that Ontario's Living Legacy was, in

my view, anyway, by far one of the best initiatives of any government to safeguard, to protect, natural heritage at that time. If this government would put a few more resources into what has been established north of here, it would protect that legacy for many generations to come.

The Living Legacy was a culmination of an extensive, extensive public consultation process. That was the strength, that was the anchor for that land use planning process, albeit most of it for crown land, both in central and mid-northern Ontario, back in the late 1990s. From that historic consultation process—I stress consultation—we developed Ontario's Living Legacy land use strategy. We also developed the Ontario Forest Accord, an accord that essentially put an end to what was referred to as the war in the woods, demonstrating a determination to bring together not only the forest industry and government, but also to bring together environmental groups that were involved in the north and get everybody around the same table to talk about a new approach, to achieve a new approach to protecting, conserving and ensuring the sustainability of not only the forest industry but the habitat in that part of Ontario.

The previous government recognized that due to immense bounty of our natural areas, it's natural that there is occasional conflict between various user groups. That's why it's important to get people around the table. That was a challenge that we faced, that we responded to directly. With a diverse group of interests teaming up to talk about this particular piece of legislation, it's important that one and all are given some consideration; in other words, consultation.

Property rights: I do wish to make mention of this in the few remaining minutes. One of the reasons that Dalton McGuinty is reviled in areas across rural Ontario and eastern Ontario is his inability to recognize and to respect the rights of rural landowners and farmers. In October 2006, this Legislature debated Bill 57, the Land Rights and Responsibilities Act, an act to restore property rights to the province of Ontario. I'm very pleased that the NDP and MPPs from my caucus voted in favour of that piece of legislation; Liberal MPPs voted against.

One of the concerns I'm hearing with regard to Bill 184 is that while we're pursuing a public good—in other words, attempting to protect endangered species, obviously a public good—we might be placing the cost on private landowners and farmers. Rather than asking these people and society to foot the bill, I favour having the public pay for projects that are in the public interest, a very simple user-pay principle. Private landowners are not expected to pay for hydro corridors across their land and should not have to pay for any government action for any other reasons that would essentially be a taking of the utility of their land. Compensation is in order when that happens.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Tabuns: It's interesting to listen to the comments of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant. In many ways, his talking about Long Point and the Carolinian forest reminded me of my childhood. We spent a lot of

time in the summers when I was a kid going down to Long Point camping. It's an extraordinary wilderness, a gorgeous place.

In the larger picture, we need nature not only for the beauty and comfort that it gives us—and it gives us a huge amount of that—but because, frankly, the economic foundations of our society rest on a stable, healthy, dynamic biological world.

There's a chief executive officer, Ray Anderson, who runs a company called Interface that makes carpeting. Anderson actually was one of the pioneers in bringing in carpeting as a leased good rather than a sold good, a piece of merchandise. What he found was that doing it that way he was actually able to recycle his materials quite dramatically, quite substantially, and reduce his impact on the world. Anderson has had a chance to talk to business groups before, and he talks about human economy as a wholly owned subsidiary of nature, and he's right. If we don't take care of that foundation, things come apart for us, which is part of the reason that discussion or debate tonight is of consequence because, although I would say all support the idea of a new Endangered Species Act, there are concerns about flaws, failings, shortcomings in this act.

If we look at what's happening in the United States, the die-off of bees, which is having a huge impact on crops, we realize we don't stand alone. We depend on others. I'm sure I'll have another chance to speak.

Mr. Oraziotti: It's a pleasure this evening to respond to the comments of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant.

Bill 184, it has been said, has widespread support by Ontarians right across this province. I want to thank those individuals who participated tonight in the debate in lending their constructive comments to the process. On this side of the House, we're certainly listening to those comments. Consultation began almost a year ago, in May 2006, with landowners, with conservation organizations, with aboriginal communities throughout Ontario, with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, through public ads as well as on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry. Consultation has been going on, and it will continue to go on through this process. We're very pleased with that.

The reality is that the bill has not been updated in 36 years. There are aspects of this bill that are in place in Ontario today through the provincial policy statements, through the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and other pieces of legislation that encapsulate some portions of the legislation. This legislation is designed to more permanently codify and consolidate those pieces of legislation and move forward with the very important task that we have in this province of protecting our endangered species. Only 42 of an identified 176 are currently on the endangered species list. We need to ensure that we capture all 176 in a process that Ontarians can be proud of and ensure that we protect their habitat and protect those species so that they will be here for generations to come. Our government has introduced a litany of en-

vironmental protections throughout our mandate. We're proud of those, and we're going to continue to move forward with Bill 184.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, who I know has over many years demonstrated concern for the environment in the province of Ontario.

The parliamentary assistant just referred to groups that have been consulted. He mentioned AMO, so I thought I should really quote from a letter from yesterday from AMO addressed to the Premier and the minister. In it—I won't read the letter—it says, "For these very serious reasons, AMO respectfully requests that the government conduct further discussions with municipal governments and key stakeholders before this bill is referred to a standing committee for consultation."

It goes on to say, "Good public policy would be better served by some additional time ...

"This is of the utmost importance to many of our members. AMO strongly encourages you to urgently consider our proposal for further discussion before proceeding with the next step in the legislative process."

So I think it's pretty clear that AMO is looking for an interruption in the process, but they may be satisfied by public consultations.

Another media release today from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and a whole group of other organizations: In it they state, "Resource groups across Ontario are warning that the provincial Liberal government is carelessly fast-tracking endangered species legislation that it knows will be a bureaucratic nightmare, expensive to implement and unlikely to result in the recovery of species at risk. In doing so, they are poised to duplicate mistakes made by the Chrétien government by ignoring the results of an independent audit of the national Species at Risk Act (SARA)."

They go on to say, "The independent audit, conducted by Stratos Inc. for the federal Department of the Environment, criticized the federal government for passing a bill that is chronically underfunded, overly prescriptive and badly misdirected."

I see I'm out of time, so I can't talk about the money aspect of that.

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm pleased—

Applause.

Mr. Parsons: Please, you're using up my time.

I'm pleased to rise to speak to this bill. I think that as I get older, I get more conscious of the fragility of life, whether it be human or whether it be nature. I can think of species in this country that used to exist in huge numbers and that now are diminished and virtually disappearing.

While I appreciate the comments and criticism of the bill that come from the other side, I recognize that we're the first government that has taken the initiative to protect animals that are at risk. At the same time, I think

we need to consider that while some animals are at risk because they're short numbers of them, there are other animals that exist in such huge numbers that they present a risk to nature and to our environment. I'm thinking specifically of cormorants.

Interjection: No.

Mr. Parsons: Yes, indeed. The cormorant, which was a native bird but in very few numbers in this province, is now overrunning parts of our country. I can speak for my community where they literally are devouring the fish. I respect the fish and I think there's a need for us to preserve the various species of them. They're destroying the foliage on our islands and they are driving other native birds out of the area. So as we are supporting this bill to protect those at risk, I call on the members from the other two parties to support our government and support my private member's bill to—

Interjection.

Mr. Parsons: Why, thank you, Mr. Miller. I do appreciate your support.

They are literally flying gillnets in my community: 75,000 of them come in and devour a pound of fish a day, taking more fish out of the Bay of Quinte than sport fishing, commercial fishing and poaching all put together. I think if we're concerned about the environment and we're concerned about animals at risk, we need to work together to protect the other bird species and the fish that these cormorants are presenting problems for.

Mr. Runciman: You're a government member, aren't you?

Mr. Parsons: I am at the moment. Do you know something I don't know?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Well, I know that if you're in government, you should be able to get it done.

Mr. Parsons: I appreciate your support on it.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Barrett: I appreciate the comments from various members on the presentation. I'm actually very proud to be part of a party that got the ball rolling back 30 years ago, in 1971. I was teaching environmental science in 1971, and the public opinion at that time was very much on top of the environmental movement. The first Earth Day commenced around that time, in 1970 or 1971. A great deal of ideas and a significant amount of legislation was passed then. I think the challenge now is to ensure that we have tactics and strategies to go beyond debating legislation and to really accomplish some of the goals inculcated in the legislation and the regulations, beyond rules and regulations and red tape and fining people.

I made mention briefly of the ALUS program. That stands for alternate land use services. It's a farmer-driven program developed in Manitoba by the Delta Waterfowl group, a program I think just as effective as some of the programs that have come forward from Ducks Unlimited, for example. Farmers, landowners, are compensated, are paid essentially for providing environmental services. It's truly a carrot approach as opposed to a punitive approach. It

has been analyzed and tested out. It meets Canada's international trade obligations. It complements the policies of the agricultural policy framework and the emerging environmental policy framework.

The Acting Speaker: It being close to 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 2121.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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No. 152A

N° 152A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 4 April 2007

Mercredi 4 avril 2007



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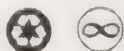
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 avril 2007

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):

Hundreds of millions of dollars potentially stolen from people who were the legitimate winners of lotteries; a minister who follows a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy when it comes to his job of overseeing Ontario Lottery and Gaming; and a scathing report from the Ombudsman that details shocking practices that have undermined public confidence in the integrity of the lottery system: Everyone in Ontario sees this as a scandalous problem, everyone except the Premier of Ontario, who views it as a communications problem.

Rather than taking action to address insider fraud, this government ignored all the evidence and instead concentrated on a communications strategy. Four key advisers to the Premier were involved in an attempt to spin the scandal by trying to discredit the CBC report. That didn’t work, so the next move was to pay off the OLG CEO with a \$720,000 severance package and offer him up as a scapegoat. The Premier’s latest communications strategy—laying the blame on Ontario’s retailers yesterday—is a new low for this government and an insult to the thousands of honest people working in convenience stores across Ontario.

The constant refusals to answer questions on who knew what and when in the Premier’s office and in the minister’s office demonstrate that the McGuinty government can’t be trusted to get to the bottom of this scandal. What are you hiding from over there? Stop the communications strategies of laying blame on everyone except the Premier and the minister responsible. If you have nothing to hide, open up the investigation to include the offices of the Premier and the minister.

ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Again, it’s a proud moment for the folks in Nipissing. Last Thursday, March 29, I had the pleasure of meeting with the Near North Student Robotics Initiative team as they competed in the greater Toronto regionals for the FIRST Robotics competition. I’d like to congratulate the students on being

recognized as regional finalists in the Toronto competition, as well as for winning the highest honour, the Regional Chairman’s Award, the week before in Waterloo, which allows them to advance to the world championships in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Regional Chairman’s Award, which is the competition’s most prestigious honour, honours the team judged to have created the best partnership effort among team participants and to have best exemplified the true meaning of FIRST: inspiring greater levels of respect and honour for science and technology.

Near North Student Robotics Initiative team members are drawn from six schools in the Nipissing district. However, the students emphasize that the NNSRI is not just their team, but the community’s team. Well, the whole community of Nipissing is very proud of the following students: Will Allen, Hafize Artan, Stephanie Boden, Michelle Bos, Jerri Clout, Spencer Elliott, Graham Fraser, Martin Gagné, Wesley Groom, Jessica Groom, Lauren Isenegger, Tyler Langlois, Melissa Laplante, Kevin Miller, Emma Mossington, Andrew Taylor, Brad Wilson, and their team captain, George Wang. I also want to thank for their tireless efforts their mentors: Nancy Dewar-Stenning, Nadia Gagné, John Groom, Jennifer Medd, Gerry St. Denis, John Aquino and Brad Stenning.

Our team has done us incredibly proud, and as they do their local fundraising getting ready for Atlanta and their last-minute preparations, I want to tell our northern ambassadors: Way to go, and all the best in Atlanta.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): I want to know when the Dalton McGuinty government is finally going to take responsibility for the Lottogate scandal it created. Ticket buyers have been ripped off by the millions. The public has lost confidence in the system, and the minister for the OLG wants to duck his head in the sand. He wants to pretend he knows nothing of the scandal, he wants the mess to go away, and the Premier is just sitting by doing nothing.

But the people of Ontario have a right to know. They have a right to know why the minister refuses to accept responsibility for this scandal. They have a right to know why senior members of the minister’s staff knew for at least one year about the lottery fraud and why the minister did nothing about it. They want to know why from the summer of 2005 to the spring of 2006 OLG was

changing their insider-win policies so there would be no investigation into the fraudulent wins. And the public has a right to know why a top adviser to the minister, now his chief of staff, was aware of inside wins but the minister was supposedly unaware.

The public has a right to know why Liberal insiders, Liberal spinners and Liberal campaigners were meeting with the OLG. The public has a right to know why the Premier thinks this scandal, this corruption, this Lottogate should be swept under the rug and why the minister should remain in cabinet even though he has lost the confidence of this House and—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Members' statements.

RIDING OF ANCASTER-DUNDAS- FLAMBOROUGH-ALDERSHOT

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I have long believed that to be an effective member of the provincial Legislature, you have to "think sync," that you need to be in sync with the people you purport to represent, and on those occasions when you are not in sync, you need to be really committed to having dialogue with your constituents so as to ascertain how best to proceed.

In our riding, we do something somewhat different. We call it deliberative democracy. I've created, with the help of some well-meaning constituents, a series of advisory groups in the riding. We have a group on education, one on the environment, one on services to seniors, one on small business, and either I or a senior member of my staff attend every meeting of the Hamilton-Wentworth Federation of Agriculture to keep abreast of agricultural issues. I can say quite candidly that while there are a number of good ideas that emanate from any one of the members here, probably 90% of the creative entrepreneurial ideas that come my way and that I get to share with my colleagues and try to move forward with come from people in my riding.

So I want to thank Anne Thomson in particular, who chairs our education group, John MacLennan for his great efforts with the environmental group, and all of the seniors and business people who contribute so consistently. We have over 600 citizens involved in offering their MPP advice. It helps me to do a better job.

I also want to take my last few seconds to say thanks to Dr. Mel Hawkrigg and his spouse, Marilyn, who for a number of years have served as chancellor and assistant to the chancellor of my alma mater, McMaster. They have done a great job. They are a great credit to the community, and I just want to say thanks to both of them.

1340

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On behalf of John Tory and the Progressive Conservative caucus, I

would like to applaud the move yesterday by OPP Commissioner Julian Fantino requesting that the Toronto Police Service conduct an independent review of all matters relating to the potential conflict of interest posed by the secondment of a former OPP officer as a vice-president of corporate security for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.

This announcement by Commissioner Fantino came during the lead-off speech by PC House leader and former Solicitor General Bob Runciman on Bill 103, the Independent Police Review Act. During his speech, Mr. Runciman indicated that the Ontario Provincial Police had been placed in the very difficult position of policing their own. Commissioner Fantino indicated, "To ensure there is no perceived or real conflict of interest, the OPP will no longer provide a seconded officer to the OLG."

Our caucus would encourage the Toronto Police Service to extend their probe into the offices of the Premier and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and their attempts to cover up Lottogate before it became public. Our caucus is still calling for the scandal-torn Liberals to call an independent investigator to review the whole scratch-and-lose scandal.

The citizens of Ontario demand accountability and transparency from their government. They demand that the Premier and the ministers of the crown be responsible and ethical in their handling of tax dollars. To date, all we have seen is a government desperately trying to spin and cover up a scandal. The one ray of hope is the leadership shown by Commissioner Julian Fantino—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Members' statements?

ONTARIO ARTISTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): The McGuinty government promised status-of-the-artist legislation back in 2003. Instead, artists in Ontario get the first weekend in June as Celebrate the Artist Weekend in their so-called artist act. ACTRA and other workers asked for protection for child performers, an income-averaging tax system, and support for housing for aging artists. Instead, they received a Celebrate the Artist Weekend. The Fashion Design Council of Canada asked that fashion design be considered part of a cultured Ontario. Instead, they received—guess what?—Celebrate the Artist Weekend. Artists everywhere asked that the recommendations of the status-of-the-artist report finally be delivered after months of delay and finally be implemented. Instead, they received a Celebrate the Artist Weekend. There will be no real celebration until we have meaningful status-of-the-artist legislation out of the McGuinty Liberal government.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. David Orazietti (Sault Ste. Marie): Residents in my community of Sault Ste. Marie are reacting very positively to a recently announced balanced budget. We are

investing \$2.1 billion in the new Ontario child benefit that will help nearly 1.3 million children. We're also investing \$43 million to help fulfill our commitment to hire an additional 8,000 nurses in Ontario, and we added an additional \$135 million to further reduce wait times. We're investing \$780 million in education to support Ontario's students, and we have continued our five-year, \$30-billion Renew Ontario program with a further \$5.9 billion for transit, highways, energy, hospitals, schools and rural infrastructure. In this budget, we have initiated a \$540-million business education tax reduction, stabilized the municipal property assessment system, and accelerated the elimination of the capital tax to encourage more business investment in Ontario.

Our plan is working, and as a result, we have 327,000 net new jobs in Ontario. In Sault Ste. Marie, health care and education and other important provincial services continue to improve.

In my community, we can't afford to go back to the irresponsible financial mismanagement of the province by the past two governments. The NDP ran four straight deficits of over \$10 billion a year, while the Conservatives tried to hide a \$5.5-billion deficit. We have a balanced budget, and we're continuing to deliver positive results for all Ontarians, results that we can be proud of.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): The role of upper government is to provide municipal government with the tools needed to provide for the residents of communities. This means helping municipalities deliver the services people deserve at a manageable taxation level. After a decade of neglect, this is a role that the people of my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh were unaccustomed to the province playing. Since 2003, that has changed.

For the first time in a long time, the government of Ontario is producing results for communities like Cornwall, Winchester and Morrisburg. We have finally moved on important projects for our hospitals in Cornwall and Winchester, a new wastewater treatment facility in Morrisburg and substantial funding for infrastructure rehabilitation throughout the united counties.

Strategic investments by the province have allowed Cornwall to move on important projects while also ensuring that taxes for the people of the city will only increase slightly—a major change from the last government, under which communities in Ontario were forced to increase taxes and cut services to manage downloaded responsibilities.

Through careful, thoughtful funding, the McGuinty government has allowed for the reconstruction of Brookdale Avenue and roads and bridges throughout the riding, thanks to Move Ontario funding. It also facilitated development in Cornwall's downtown core, improved delivery of health care and education and provided discretionary funds for the city to use to best serve its citizens.

This is responsible government. We are working with Ontario municipalities to ensure that the citizens of this great province have the best possible outcomes.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I rise in the House today as a reminder that the McGuinty Liberals are delivering open, transparent and accountable government.

While the member opposite talks a lot about ministerial responsibility and integrity, his actions seem to conflict with his rhetoric. I would like to remind members of this Legislature where that member really stands. Ontarians remember his failure to reprimand a member of his caucus for making derogatory remarks about a female MP. That party also hid a \$5.5-billion budget deficit that was delivered in an auto plant. Where is the integrity in that?

The McGuinty Liberals are delivering open, transparent, accountable government through expanding salary disclosure mechanisms and giving new powers to the Auditor General, amongst other things.

And good government means delivering results: 9.7 million patient days saved because of reductions in wait times; 92% of primary classes have 23 or fewer students; and close to 4,900 new staff to the long-term-care home sector.

If the members opposite want to be accountable to Ontarians, then why do they want to take public school funding and put it into private schools? Or why do they want to take \$2.5 billion out of health care, which is vital for the well-being of all Ontarians?

The McGuinty Liberals are working hard to ensure fair, accountable and good government. We are delivering that and making sure that Ontarians have the tools to succeed.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated April 4, 2007, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO CLIMATE CHANGE ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 SUR LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES EN ONTARIO

Mr. Bisson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 200, An Act to provide for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario / Projet de loi 200,

Loi prévoyant la réduction des émissions de gaz à effet de serre en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Comme on le sait en Ontario, comme partout dans le nord de l'Amérique du nord, on reconnaît de plus en plus que notre environnement commence à diminuer quand ça vient aux gaz à effet de serre. En Ontario c'est un problème, mais spécifiquement c'est un problème au nord de l'Ontario. On voit justement que le changement de climat au nord, et spécialement dans la région que je représente, a des effets négatifs sur l'environnement. C'est pour cette raison-là qu'on veut proposer ce projet de loi.

1350

The act, simply put, would make the minister responsible for putting in place a plan to reduce greenhouse gases, starting in 2008 and up to 2020, by up to 25% from 1990 levels. In addition, this particular bill would give the Environmental Commissioner the ability to review the work that the minister has or has not done and to make sure that the work set out in this bill actually gets done. I think it's high time that we pass this bill.

VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce to you in the members' gallery today Kim Leblanc and her son Matt, who have joined us here for question period. I want to welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery some of the 2007 recipients of the internationally recognized Ordre de la Pléiade award. These men and women will be honoured today by the Ontario branch for the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie for their outstanding contributions to French-speaking communities in the province. The ceremony will be held in the Lieutenant Governor's suite in the presence of the Honourable James Bartleman, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, later this afternoon.

The recipients of this prestigious award for 2007 are: Yvan Brousseau, Omer Cantin, Mariette Carrier-Fraser, Jean Comtois, Claude DesRosiers, Joffre Victor Dupuis, Katch Koch and Normand Labrie. Please join me in welcoming our guests.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Last August, I had the opportunity to tour the Vineland Research Station and

help to celebrate its 100 years of impressive contributions to the community and to the province.

The months leading up to that celebration were spent by the community discussing the future. A strong voice emerged in support of revitalizing agri-food research at Vineland, a voice that our government answered by appointing the Vineland Renaissance Advisory Panel and asking them to develop a business case for the future of this research station. This panel was chaired by Donald Ziraldo, and he, along with the panel members, developed a compelling vision for the future. Their report pointed to the need for collaboration and partnerships among a broad range of government, academic and industry organizations.

I want to thank Donald and the panel members—James Farrar, Dr. Cal Stiller and Jamie Warner—for their outstanding efforts. They worked very hard on tight timelines to deliver their findings.

We have listened to these findings. We understand how important promoting a culture of new ideas and new discoveries is to the future of our great agri-food industry and the quality of life in Ontario, and we welcome partnerships that will keep this industry ahead of the curve.

Together, our federal and provincial governments are taking the first step to create a vital hub for horticultural science and innovation in Vineland by making it a model for research facilities elsewhere in the province, and indeed in the country.

Yesterday, I returned to the Vineland Research Station with Dean Allison, representing the federal government, and my colleagues Minister Jim Bradley and Jennifer Mossop to share some good news. That news was a provincial investment of \$12.5 million in the new Vineland Research and Innovation Centre. That investment was made along with a federal contribution of \$15.5 million that will be invested over the next five years for this centre.

This total federal-provincial investment of \$28 million will support research and revitalization projects at Vineland. This news was enthusiastically received by about 100 members of the community. It serves as a strong base that is already attracting additional funding support from other organizations and individuals, such as Flowers Canada, the Niagara Peninsula Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association and Donald Ziraldo.

Together, we are working to plant the seeds of success for Vineland and for horticultural research across the province. We anticipate the future with renewed enthusiasm and look forward to building a continued legacy of growth and success.

As a next step, I want to tell you that both levels of government will explore additional means to support the activities of this new centre, where we can optimize our investments in land, facilities and ongoing support for horticultural research. We are committed to working with industry to bolster ongoing support for the centre.

I'm very excited about the potential of the new centre. It will have the capacity to serve as a major contributor to Ontario's horticulture sector. This is great news for our

agri-food sector, great news for the Niagara region and great news for the people of Ontario.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I rise in the House today to tell you about our government's public transit improvements to better serve the people of Hamilton.

Since we took office nearly four years ago, the province has invested \$1.8 billion in GO Transit to benefit riders in Hamilton and the GTA, including \$457 million this year.

Tomorrow, I will be in Hamilton to open a new GO bus terminal at McMaster University, in which we've invested \$750,000.

Since 2004, we have helped GO Transit serve new riders by opening four new train stations, including East Gwillimbury, Mount Pleasant, Kennedy and the Milliken station. We opened a new GO bus terminal at the Square One shopping mall in Mississauga.

We're also expanding capacity. We have purchased 70 new bi-level railcars that can carry seven million more passengers per year, 27 more powerful and fuel-efficient locomotives, 144 new accessible buses, 12 double-decker buses, and we have added 500 new bus trips per day.

We've also added 6,000 new parking spaces across the GO Transit system to take the cars off the road every workday.

Since 2003, this government has also invested \$42 million to improve municipal transit in Hamilton.

Applause.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Hamilton has its own cheering section.

Just yesterday, Hamilton took delivery of 12 new hybrid buses. These were partially funded by the province. It's another example of working together with the municipalities.

We've delivered on our commitment to pump a share of the provincial gas tax into public transit right across this province.

On October 1, 2006, we increased funding to two cents for every litre of gasoline sold in Ontario, and this year alone we are giving municipalities \$313 million in gas tax funding. So what does that mean? It means expanded service, and it means many new, more comfortable and accessible buses right across Ontario.

By September 2007, the city of Hamilton will have received almost \$26 million in gas tax funding from the province since 2004.

In addition, the McGuinty government has provided Hamilton with \$14.3 million to replace transit vehicles. We've committed \$2.2 million to help replace vehicles this year and over \$520,000 to expand transit. I'm pleased to say that these investments are paying off.

Hamilton's transit ridership increased by 2.7% from 2003 to 2005. So what does that mean? It means 570,000 more passenger trips, and what that means is 475,000 fewer car trips each year in and around Hamilton.

Getting more people out of their cars and on to public transit means we're all breathing cleaner air, burning less fuel and reducing gridlock.

Improving public transit is one part of this government's efforts to create what we call a more sustainable transportation system.

A milestone in this effort, of course, was creating the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority. This agency will develop an integrated plan for local transit, GO Transit and major roads in Hamilton and the greater Toronto area.

1400

We want to give riders the convenience of using one fare card to travel across 10 different transit systems from Hamilton to Durham—each region—by developing the GTA fare card.

To create a cleaner environment, the Ministry of Transportation will host a leading-edge forum this year, the first of its kind in the history of this province, to explore new transportation technologies and share ideas from around the world on how to make the transportation sector in this province more sustainable—the first sustainable transportation summit in the history of this province.

I'm proud that our commitment to public transit is making a difference for the people who live and work in Hamilton and for all the people who live and work in this province.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the importance arts and culture play in building quality of place and economic development in our communities.

Here in Ontario, some amazing things are happening in the cultural sector, thanks to the remarkably talented people in Ontario.

I am proud of what this government has done in support of our arts and cultural sector, and in recognizing our artists in our 2007-08 budget.

We have made unwavering commitments to all of our artists through our support of the Ontario Arts Council, which will receive an increase of \$15 million in annual funding by 2009-10, representing a 38% increase.

In 2005-06, the Ontario Arts Council provided \$35.7 million to nearly 1,300 individual artists and 836 organizations in 253 communities across Ontario.

In addition to increased funding, and to recognize the contributions that arts and culture make to Ontario's economy and quality of life, our government has introduced new legislation, the proposed Status of Ontario Artists Act. Should this pass, it would be an important first step in our plan to continually improve the environment our artists live and work in.

Yesterday, I had the pleasure of announcing that the Ontario Trillium Foundation will receive an increase of \$20 million in funding, phased in over three years. This organization provides approximately 1,500 grants per year to not-for-profit and charitable organizations.

Ontario's museums are another important part of Ontario's culture. We are increasing funding to the community museum operating grants program by \$2.3 million, to approximately \$5 million. This program assists 180 museums across Ontario.

We're also assisting communities through the arts endowment fund. This fund matches dollars raised from private donors by arts organizations. I'm particularly pleased that in the 2007 budget we announced an investment of \$10 million for the arts endowment fund.

As a government, we realize the importance of our cultural industries. The Ontario Media Development Corp., the lead agency supporting and strengthening Ontario's cultural industries, including magazine and book publishing, sound recording, film and television, and interactive digital media, will receive another \$5 million in one-time funding.

In total, this current budget, if passed, will provide an additional \$76.5 million to our arts and culture sector for 2007-08. This is on top of the \$6.8 million recently provided to rural communities for arts and culture projects through this government's fall economic stimulus package.

Our government recognizes that our entertainment and creative industries are one of three of Ontario's economic sectors expected to experience the most rapid growth in the next 20 years. That is why we have invested \$152 million and land valued at \$31 million to seven projects in downtown Toronto venues—projects that people call Ontario's cultural renaissance. This cultural renaissance breeds new life into Toronto as a cultural tourism destination. The Ontario government has also invested \$25 million in the development of the Toronto International Film Festival's new centre.

By supporting arts and culture, we are investing in the future prosperity of the province. I am proud of the leadership our government is showing in recognizing our artists and our cultural and heritage sectors. But although we are extremely proud of our achievements, we also understand that there is much more that needs to be done.

HEALTHIER SCHOOLS STRATEGY

STRATÉGIE VISANT DES ÉCOLES PLUS SAINES

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion):

On December 11, 2006, our great education minister, Kathleen Wynne, and I, issued a healthy schools challenge to every school in the province as part of the new healthy schools recognition program. We challenged schools across the province to partner with their school community to do at least one more thing to make their students and schools healthier in the 2006-07 school year.

I am pleased to give you an update on the success of the program so far. The deadline for making a pledge and accepting the challenge is April 15 of this year, and I want to encourage all Ontario schools to act now so they can be recognized for their efforts. I'm proud to report

that hundreds of schools and over half of the Ontario school boards have already accepted the McGuinty government's healthy schools challenge. All of these schools have pledged to do something that will make their school environment healthier.

Il conviendrait de féliciter chaque école qui a répondu au défi, pour son engagement envers la santé de ses étudiants.

À titre de ministre de la Promotion de la santé, un aspect qui préoccupe particulièrement mon ministère est d'aider les gens à faire des choix éclairés et positifs quant à une alimentation saine et une vie active.

According to the recent report, Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids, released by the federal standing committee on health at the House of Commons, a supportive school environment can contribute to reduced rates of overweight and obese children. We all know that teachers, parents, staff and community partners play an important role in helping students make positive choices, and we understand that all of them are involved in this very important effort.

By educating kids and providing them with the right tools, they will become great champions for good health. Just as kids taught their parents about the benefits of recycling and the dangers of smoking, they can use their persuasive talents to encourage moms and dads to make healthier choices.

I want to take a moment to outline some of the great initiatives I've heard about so far across our province. Elementary school students in Cornwall, for instance, are participating in a new healthy breakfast club. An elementary school in Windsor now enjoys a lunch hour fitness program. Students at a secondary school in Orillia founded Students Helping Students, to help raise funds to purchase healthy lunches for fellow students in need.

These are just a few examples of the exciting initiatives around the healthy eating and physical activity plan. But the program goes well beyond that. The healthy schools recognition program is based on a comprehensive approach to health.

I want to take a moment to thank one of my parliamentary assistants, Peter Fonseca, whose idea it was to bring this kind of initiative to the fore. We thank Peter very, very much. It looks at all factors that contribute to the overall health of students, from healthy eating and physical activity to mental health and bullying prevention.

To help schools understand the kinds of activities they could undertake to become healthier, the Ministry of Education consulted with experts from the education and health promotion sectors to develop the foundation for a healthy school framework. This framework is an important tool, because it integrates existing practices and evidence of what works. It's posted on the healthy schools section of Minister Wynne's website.

I want to take a moment to highlight a few of the other excellent initiatives that focus on areas of school health. In Sault Ste. Marie, one school has developed a body image program to focus on healthy growth and

development. A school in Carleton Place is hosting an awareness week on substance use and abuse. A school in Ottawa is focusing on mental health, with a lunchtime club for students to encourage inclusion and peer support. A school in Cambridge is creating a logo and motto that will be visible in the school to affirm that it is a bully-free zone. And in December, in my own riding at Frank Ryan Catholic Senior Elementary School, they pledged to create a supportive school environment by implementing an anti-bullying program called Creating a Culture of Respect.

1410

This spring, we'll be asking all MPPs from this Legislature to present every school in their constituencies that accepted and reached the healthy school challenge with a pennant that can be displayed in their school, which will acknowledge their commitment to creating healthier schools for healthier Ontarians.

This is an important initiative. Schools are a key setting for promoting health in our province, and we have done much in the school setting: from the removal of junk food in vending machines to daily physical activity to creating a standard for nutritional guidelines for school cafeterias. But much more has to be done. We know that good health promotes better learning and that students, teachers and the broader community all benefit when children learn in a healthy environment. And we know that healthier schools also make an impact on student achievement. Students think and feel better when they're learning in a healthy environment.

In conclusion, I want to encourage every school in the province to accept our challenge and be part of the healthy schools recognition program. We all win when our children learn in a healthier school.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Well, kudos to Flowers Canada and Niagara fruit and vegetable growers for securing the federal-provincial dollars to create an ag innovation centre at Vineland. This was a photo op for some of the area politicians. I regret the MPP for Erie-Lincoln was not invited.

For five years now, there has been a funding request for an ag innovation centre at Simcoe, at the University of Guelph horticultural research station. As thousands of acres of tobacco exit the industry, we have to have that announcement immediately.

While in Vineland, Agriculture Minister Dombrowsky should have explained the \$191-million cut in this year's anti-farmer budget. Last year, she spent \$809 million on her ministry plus \$278 million on assistance, totalling just under \$1.1 billion. This year, she's spending \$876 million on her ministry plus only \$20 million on assistance. That totals \$896 million, or \$191 million less—no exit dollars for tobacco, no RMP dollars for cash crops, and \$258 million less for farm safety net programs.

Yesterday's news release said, "Research and innovation are crucial to the future success of Ontario's agri-food sector." Well, minister, we take you at your word: \$12.5 million is a start, and the research community and tobacco country and fruit and vegetable country to the west of Niagara look forward to an immediate green light for the Simcoe ag innovation centre.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the official opposition and our leader, John Tory. I'm actually cynical about any announcement or photo op by the McGuinty government. The current lottery scandal proves the McGuinty government can't even be trusted to give money away. If we can't count on them to run a lottery, how can we ever count on them to run a sophisticated transportation network?

Let's just look at one example of this government's dismal performance in the delivery of the transportation sector and the gridlock issue specifically. Let's look at how long it took to establish the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority. It's generally agreed that the GTTA is a priority for fighting gridlock with planning and providing some form of leadership. However, Dalton McGuinty's government announced the GTTA in three budgets, three throne speeches and other occasions, without delivering on the goods: No funding at this time. I would also have hoped that when the GTTA was finally approved last year, this government sprang into action. I don't think so.

The last thing I should say about the McGuinty government is that they make promises that they never intend to keep. Be careful of the transit issue, because this government will deliver nothing, but it will cost you more. The citizens of Ontario deserve more. Another Liberal photo op; more broken promises.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Culture on behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus. I think perhaps the question of looking at increasing grants is open to a certain amount of interpretation, because last year the operating grant didn't even cover the insurance bill in one of my museums. So to suggest that there is increased money for museums, I certainly hope that it would look at some of the real issues that are in the area of operating museums.

The minister made reference to the introduction of the status-of-the-artist legislation. I think something that people need to understand is the fact that it was buried in the budget and there's no indication at this point in terms of details. I would just remind people that we've been waiting on this Liberal promise for the last three and a half years. There really still isn't much for people to assume or go on from this minister and this announcement.

HEALTHIER SCHOOLS STRATEGY

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I'm responding to Mr. Watson's healthy schools statement.

I wish the minister would get together with the Minister of Education and build some gymnasiums in our elementary schools so the kids can go down to the gym and exercise. Last week, I was in Huntley Centennial Public School in Carp. The gym is half the size it should be. In fact, the only exercise they can participate in is tai chi, because the movements are very, very slow.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): My comments are in response to the Minister of Transportation.

There's no question that GO Transit would be great if only Dalton McGuinty would let it go. The reality for lots of transit riders is that GO Transit is more often like no transit. People want to take it. People want to take GO—

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: You instructed the member who is sitting here that they must use the riding or the person's title, and I heard that violated again.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): That is always the case, and thank you for reminding us.

Member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Tabuns: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More than ever, however, GO Transit is an exercise in frustration: mechanical problems, switch problems, overcrowded cars, delays, cancellation after cancellation after cancellation. Minister, GO Transit riders are sick and tired of waiting in the rain for trains to come when they want to be on the job or they want to get home to their families. They need to see real action to improve GO Transit. What we are seeing today, unfortunately, is more pre-election self-congratulation, more rhetoric. This is done simply to make people forget the sorry record of this government when it comes to transit.

The Premier had a chance to improve service. He didn't get the job done. Working families deserve better, and you can count on my leader, Howard Hampton, and the NDP to make transit function in this province.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I'm responding to the Minister of Culture. This government cut \$90 million from the culture budget last year, so she is right: There is certainly much, much, much more that they can do.

For one thing, they could bring in status-of-the-artist legislation, real status-of-the-artist legislation, like the Ontario Federation of Labour and cultural workers asked for and like I've asked for in my resolution, in Bill 191: legislation that leads to protection for child performers, that gives access to training, that gives favourable tax

measures, that gives housing, that gives a collective bargaining procedure for all professional artists in this province.

That's what they could do if they were really serious about helping artists. Instead, what this bill does is give a Celebrate the Artist Weekend in June, and quite frankly, that's not nearly enough. That's shameful.

AGRICULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Well, it was nice to hear from the Minister of Agriculture that she was down in Vineland in Niagara region, because if she was down in Vineland, she would know about the 2,000 acres of juice grape production, most of it located in Niagara region. If she was down there, she would know about the 105 juice grape growers here in the province of Ontario, most of them right down there in Niagara region, who, because of the shutdown, the closure, of the Cadbury Schweppes plant in St. Catharines—another 26 good jobs lost here in Dalton McGuinty's Liberal Ontario, along with—

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): That's your riding, is it?

Mr. Kormos: My riding, Mr. Patten? No, that's Jim Bradley's St. Catharines riding, Cadbury Schweppes: 26 more jobs lost here in Dalton McGuinty's Liberal Ontario, and 105 farmers sitting on 2,000 acres of land with a product for which there is no market—farmers who have been ignored by this government, by its budget and by its Minister of Agriculture. She goes down to Vineland and wants to do photo ops with federal counterparts, but the Minister of Agriculture won't go down there and say a word to those farmers now who are desperate. Some of them are second-, third- and fourth-generation farmers of those lands. Their lands are in your greenbelt. Those farmers are the most effective stewards of that very scarce and valuable farmland, far more so than any legislative effort, including your so-called greenbelt exercise.

1420

What do you say to them? You say to them, "Sit on land that's locked into a greenbelt." You say to them, "Let your land lie fallow." You say to them, "Don't even think about bothering to pay mortgages and ongoing debts associated with that land." You tell them you won't assist them in transferring their product over into wine grape, but having said that, you won't change the Wine Content Act to increase the amount of Ontario grape that's required for Ontario wine. Grape growers in Niagara are suffering the risk, on an annual basis, of surpluses, and that's the direct responsibility of this government's failure to amend the Wine Content Act to ensure greater content of Ontario grape in Ontario wine.

Your failure to act in response to Niagara grape farmers has put thousands of acres of good, valuable, scarce farmland at risk, and it has put those hard-working families at real risk of bankruptcy and being forced off those lands after generations of stewardship of those valuable pieces of property. Shame on you, Minister.

VISITORS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): I would ask all members of the Legislature to join me in welcoming the grade 10 students of Albert Campbell Collegiate Institute, in my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River. They're joined by their teacher, Mrs. Kelso, and they're in the east gallery.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I would ask that we recognize Mr. Sam Hoppe, who is in the Speaker's gallery today with his personal attendant, Erica McCalla. He has watched question period religiously. This is his first visit to the Legislature. He is a resident at Bendale Acres, a long-term-care facility in Scarborough. He is president of the residents' council of Bendale Acres. I would ask all members to extend a warm welcome to him.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): In the gallery just behind me is Mr. Lawrence Dawkins, who has brought another class to this Legislature, which he does very, very often. I don't know what school they're from; I was trying to get him to mouth it to me but I can't read his lips. I want to welcome him and his class here today anyway.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY
AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. This matter with the lottery scandal started with your minister saying that he saw nothing, he knew nothing and he did nothing—at least we know the last part is true—then there were the April e-mails which no one knew much about, then it was your chief political schemer, Don Guy, and you refused to answer three questions about his involvement when we all knew he was involved.

Now we have Wilson Lee, the minister's chief of staff, who was in a late August meeting in which your office said that these rip-offs were just a communications problem. Now what does he say through his new official spokesperson? It's a new concept in your government that chiefs of staff have official spokespeople who work in your office. He says, "There is no recollection." Shades of Mr. Lafleur at the Gomery commission, who said, "I don't remember," over and over again—murky, fuzzy, less than straightforward.

We need an independent investigation to clear the air on all this. Why won't you order one?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): There has been a lot of heat generated on this issue of late but not a lot of light, so I'm going to do my best to shed a bit of light on this.

I think Ontarians want to know how this all came about. Our lottery system was created in the 1970s. It turns out that unfortunately there have been a few bad-

apple retailers of lottery tickets, so-called insiders, who have been gaming the system. They've been cheating, and they've done that at the expense of legitimate ticket buyers. That has been going on for quite some time. In fact, the Ombudsman's first documented case comes from 1993.

Those same kinds of concerns have been raised also in British Columbia, in Nova Scotia and in New Brunswick. In BC, the Ombudsman is already conducting an investigation; in Nova Scotia, the government has launched its own investigation; and I know that in New Brunswick, the Ombudsman is looking into this matter.

Mr. Tory: I'm not sure if all that is supposed to explain that it's okay that this is all going on here and the government is doing nothing about it, and why they refuse to act to have an independent investigation. I'm not really sure what all that means. But the bottom line is that the Premier talks about how his government is implementing all the recommendations and all is well that ends well and we should all just go back to sleep, especially his minister and his office, who were asleep.

But take the case of the \$12.5-million prize awarded to or given to a woman that the lottery corporation apparently knew had no rightful claim to the money. They "held their noses," to use the expression that's right in the Ombudsman's report, despite the misgivings, and awarded the prize under the cover of darkness: no announcement, no press release, no nothing. The Ombudsman's report says right in there that this woman apparently has money she shouldn't have.

Now, I tried the other day and I'm going to ask you again: Do you think you and your government and the lottery corporation have any responsibility at all to do anything through the civil courts or any other way you could to try and protect that money and maybe even try to get it back in case the rightful owner shows up?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I'll allow the leader of the official opposition to make it his preserve when it comes to allegations unfounded in nature and to innuendo. Again, I'm going to stick to the facts today.

We're making a number of changes in view of the evidence that was uncovered by the Ombudsman and brought forward. In fact, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. itself has put forward a seven-point action plan, and I look forward to getting into that in some detail, because I'm sure my friend will present me with all kinds of opportunities today. KPMG came forward with 40 separate recommendations of their own. The Ombudsman himself came forward with 23 recommendations as well.

Seventeen of those recommendations are already in place; 25 more will be in place by the end of June. We will continue to move aggressively on each and every one of those 70 separate recommendations.

Mr. Tory: In case the Premier is suggesting that it's innuendo to talk about this woman having the money, I refer you to paragraph 74 of the Ombudsman's report, where he concludes by saying, "Incredibly, despite all this, the corporation paid her the \$12.5 million after the

ticket expired." This is from his report. You refuse to get up—you just recite old passages out of a briefing book, as opposed to saying you're actually going to do anything to protect that money that might well belong to someone else.

Now, the Ombudsman said in his report, and it's interesting just how right he was when he said, "There are disturbing signs that the culture that led to the difficulties in the first place is not gone." And he goes on to say that "a profound cultural shift has yet to occur."

The proof for this is a gentleman that we've spoken to who thinks he might be the rightful owner of the \$12.5-million ticket. We referred him, as I think was the proper thing to do, to the Ombudsman, and I understand the Ombudsman has subsequently referred him to the OPP. He called the lottery corporation on March 15, 2007. That's an important date, because it's eight days after the lottery corporation received a draft report from the Ombudsman and after the OLG responded. What was he told? He was told someone would call him back, and nobody did. Do you think this is evidence of an organization—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I am sure the leader of the official opposition actually believes the best thing to do in the circumstances is to turn these matters over to the Ontario Provincial Police, which is exactly what we have done.

Now, with respect to passing judgment on the response being offered by Ontario Lottery and Gaming, let me quote again from the Ombudsman's report. They received a letter from OLG chair Michael Gough. He said, "We want to assure you that the OLG is committed to acting quickly to implement the recommendations in your report, including the recommendations made by KPMG, in order to better serve and protect Ontarians." Mr. Gough, head of OLG, goes on to specifically offer the following observation, when he didn't have to. He says, "... we would like to comment on your findings with respect to the level of service and protection we have offered our customers. There is no doubt we could and should have done better. We agree with your assessment of OLG's treatment of Mr. Edmonds. Our apology to him was long overdue and absolutely sincere...." I get the sense that OLG wants to move forward.

1430

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: Again for the Premier: It's hard to conclude that, when you have a man coming forward in March who says that he might own a ticket—and whether or not he does is for someone else to determine. He's coming forward and saying he—

Interjection.

Mr. Tory: This man just came forward yesterday. I don't know how you'd know that.

Page 2 of the Ombudsman's report: They tried to downplay the revelations of the CBC program; page 5: "A profound cultural shift has yet to occur...."; page 50:

"A ... real danger that some of its initiatives will result in mere window dressing." That's what the Ombudsman says.

The Premier says this stuff has been referred to the OPP, but that stands in stark contrast to what this gentleman was told. Your new and reformed lottery corporation told him not to contact a lawyer, not to call the OPP. When they finally got someone to call him back, that's what he was told. These are not the actions of an organization interested in getting at the truth; it's what kidnappers normally tell people.

My question for the Premier is this: Whether he owns the ticket or not, and someone else will ultimately determine that, does he think this kind of approach—don't call a lawyer, don't call the OPP—is appropriate for an organization that is trying to protect—

The Speaker: The question's been asked. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm not sure about the reference and the comparison between OLG and kidnappers. I'll leave it to Mr. Tory to explain that in his scrum.

Again, I think the simple answer and the best answer is that if there are any concerns of this nature, they ought to be—

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier, the House leader for the government made a point with you to ensure that members do not use the names of members in this House. If it's good for the government, surely it's good for the official opposition. I would ask you to call the Premier to order for that.

The Speaker: I will remind all members that proper names are not to be used in this place. You either refer to members by their riding or by the particular ministry they represent.

Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think Ontarians want to know what changes are being made with respect to their lottery system to ensure that they can have confidence in it. I want to cite some of those that I think are very pertinent, very salient. One of those is that there's now a requirement to install at every lottery terminal location a device enabling consumers to electronically check their own tickets and see the value of their prize instantly. That's important because there is a real concern, in some cases, obviously, that insiders might have appropriated those winning tickets and not divulged accurate information about whether somebody won or not. This is specifically designed to protect the interests of consumers in that regard.

Mr. Tory: You see, it's very interesting, because I took a phone call on a TV program at noon today from a man who said that when you use those machines, half the time they don't work. That's what he said. So you're saying, "All's well that ends well. Everything's okay. Let's not worry about a thing"—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Finance. I remind all members that we all need to be able to hear the question and we all need to be able to hear the response.

Mr. Tory: He's got these kind of tidy scripted answers that everything's okay, we don't need to worry about another thing. We've had for a year now, since April, e-mails into the minister's office. The government should have been working to fix this scandal, but they haven't. They tried to sweep it under the carpet every chance they had—April, August and many times in between. Even in the days after the Ombudsman released his report, this man who came in thinking he owns the \$12.5-million ticket—which you'll do nothing to recover—is told not to call the police and not to contact a lawyer by people at the lottery corporation.

These are not the actions of an agency that is looking out for the public interest and to protect this man's interest. These are people in denial. They're looking at the standards set by the boss, as the TVOntario program said. You wouldn't say whether it was appropriate for him to be told not to call the OPP or a lawyer. Why don't you just get on with asking for the independent investigation we all need?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We've had an independent investigation. The leader of the official opposition may not believe in the integrity of the Ombudsman when it comes to conducting independent investigations, but we do.

Something else that Ontario lottery ticket purchasers should recognize is that from now on, lottery retailers will be permitted to check tickets only for those customers who have been asked to sign the back of their tickets. Again, lottery ticket purchasers now have an option. They can use the terminals themselves through a device to check their own tickets to determine whether or not they've won, or they could turn it over to the retailer, but only on the condition that they first sign that ticket as an additional security measure. Beyond that, customer-facing video screens at lottery terminal locations must now tell players in larger characters than ever before if they've won when they have retailers check their tickets. Those are practical changes, designed to protect the interests of Ontario lottery ticket buyers.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: I can only say that when it comes to a very simple request, like a full, open and independent investigation on the matters that haven't been investigated, people expect their Premier to do the right thing, especially when it's messy and especially when the truth might hurt.

According to the Ombudsman, we apparently have one person with \$12.5 million in winnings that she shouldn't have. We have another person who says it belongs to him, and when he calls the very organization that you say is new and reformed, he's told, "Don't call a lawyer. Don't call the OPP." In fact, he's told, "Don't call us; we'll call you."

We have your office and the minister's office all over this: spin doctors and schemers everywhere. What we need to know is, who knew what, when did they know it and what did they do when they found out about it? Don't you think it's time for the minister to resign and for you to call an open, independent inquiry into all the

things—and there are lots of them—that have not been looked into by anybody as yet? Why won't you get on with it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'll allow the leader of the official opposition to engage in unfounded allegations and innuendo, but on this side of the House at least, we've got to look to substantive approaches to significant policy concerns.

We've had the Ombudsman conduct his own independent inquiry, and that apparently does not satisfy the leader of the official opposition. Beyond that, he says that he has specific knowledge—credible, he claims—about an individual or two or three or four—who knows how many more?—and he won't refer these matters to the Ontario Provincial Police.

I have every confidence in our Ontario Provincial Police. We've turned over any matters to them that we think are appropriate. It's now in their hands to determine whether or not and what actions they think are appropriate in the circumstances. We will continue to do what we need to do to uphold the integrity of the people of Ontario's lottery and gaming system.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. The OPP commissioner has asked the Toronto Police Service to investigate the potential conflict of interest involving the OPP, because an OPP officer was the head of security at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. as the lottery insider scandal unfolded. Michael Sharland, a senior OPP officer, head of corporate security for the OLG when the OPP decided not to investigate allegations of insider fraud and obstruction in 2004, is at the heart of this potential conflict.

Premier, you insisted that turning the investigation over to the OPP is the best way to deal with the scandal at the OLG. In view of the conflict of interest, do you wish to reconsider your position?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Of course not. Far be it from me to comment on police actions, but it seems to me that Commissioner Fantino is being prudent and responsible. He understands that some concerns have been raised about whether or not they might be conflicted when it comes to the fact that there was a former member of the OPP service who was seconded to OLG, so he has quite appropriately and quite responsibly, I think, referred the matter to the Toronto Police Service and said, "Hey, guys, you take a look at it; give us your best advice on this and tell us how we should go forward with respect to that particular aspect of this investigation." I think that's responsible.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, here's your government's position: When this first unfolded, you tried to treat it as a public relations problem. Then you tried to hand it off to the OPP. The OPP is saying, "No, we're conflicted. Not only is there a lottery scandal, but we're not in a position to examine it." The problem grows larger and larger every day. The question is, when is the Premier of Ontario going to take his responsibility and order a judicial inquiry so that the people of Ontario who have been fleeced can at least get to the bottom of this?

1440

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let's see if we've got this straight. Apparently, the problems that have arisen in British Columbia are connected to our government. Apparently, the problems that have arisen in New Brunswick are also connected to our government. The problems that have arisen in Nova Scotia are also connected to our government. Apparently, we cannot trust the Ombudsman, who has reviewed this matter in some detail. Now we hear from the leader of the NDP that we cannot possibly trust the Ontario Provincial Police either. Nobody can be trusted in these matters. There is a plot afoot that somehow has infected the nation as a whole.

I just don't bring that kind of cynicism to bear on my work. There is a specific issue that has been raised. What we will continue to do is follow the specific recommendations put forward. We received 70 recommendations, some from KPMG, some from OLG itself, but the most important ones from the Ombudsman, and we're moving ahead on all those recommendations.

Mr. Hampton: The people who are infected are the McGuinty government, who are trying to cover up a problem which is growing larger every day. Even the OPP commissioner says this is now a problem for him. So, Premier, how large does this problem have to become? The OPP say they're not in a position to investigate. Let's see: Your former chief of staff has his fingerprints all over it. Warren Kinsella, Liberal fixer, has his fingerprints all over it. Your former communications chief of staff has his fingerprints all over it. How large does this have to become, how many Liberals have to be drawn into the circle, before you, as Premier, start acting on behalf of the people of Ontario instead of acting on behalf of your own cover-up? When are you going to call a judicial inquiry so that the people of Ontario will have some confidence that this is being handled honestly and openly?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I think we've got a lot of heat coming there, but not a lot of light.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: But you missed it the first time. The point I'm making is that while it's in the interest of the opposition to generate a lot of heat and a lot of smoke here, we're going to keep our eye on the ball.

The first documented case goes back to 1993. As I say, there are these kinds of concerns being raised throughout the country today. There have been some very specific recommendations brought forward by KPMG, OLG itself, and the Ombudsman. We embrace those and adopt them wholeheartedly.

I just described in some detail three specific kinds of changes that are going to be made right at the retail front line so that when you go to buy that ticket, some changes are there now to improve your confidence in the integrity of the system. That's what Ontarians look for us to do. In fact, we've adopted those and we will continue to adopt many more changes that are in the interests of Ontarians.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: The only people who are afraid of the light on this issue are the McGuinty government. The light of day would show the people of Ontario who is responsible when literally hundreds, if not thousands, of people were ripped off of millions of dollars because of your lottery fraud. Premier, you've continued to try to treat this as public relations poker while innocent people were fleeced.

My next question is this: Can you explain, when this unfolded, why the people who got called in were all Liberal Party fixers? For example, what would Don Guy, your re-election strategist, be doing called in on this issue? What would Warren Kinsella, sort of the master of dirty tricks in election campaigns, be doing when this unfolded? What would Jim Warren, your former chief of communications, be doing? When this started to unfold, it seems that a whole bunch of Liberal insiders—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Obviously, it's a good thing that the OLG reacted to some of the evidence that was coming to the light of day regarding issues that had dated back to at least 1993. There's no reason to believe that there were not issues before that as well; in fact, possibly since the advent of the system in Ontario in 1975.

I think it's a really important thing that they had the meetings, that they convened meetings, that they invited a number of people to those meetings, but I think what's still more important is what action flowed from those meetings. One of those things was the seven-point action plan, some of which I recently described just a few moments ago in this House, about improving the confidence that a lottery ticket buyer would have here in Ontario at the point of sale to improve their confidence in the system. That also led to the Ombudsman himself taking an active interest in this matter. He conducted a thorough investigation. It was absolutely independent. He has come forward with very concrete, reasonable recommendations, and we intend to adopt each and every one of them.

Mr. Hampton: Three Liberal insider political fixers get called in, and what does the Ontario lottery corporation try to do? They try to discredit poor Bob Edmonds and they try to discredit people who are complaining about lottery insider fraud.

Premier, you have treated this as a game of political—shall we say—public relations poker, rather than dealing with the real, substantial issues. Premier, this is not a communications issue. Thousands of people—hospitals, charities, innocent folks—were cheated out of millions of dollars. Inhibiting the right thing, stopping an investigation, trying to discredit the evidence that's there, is simply not being straight with the people of Ontario. When are we going to have a judicial investigation? What are you trying to hide?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: One of the recommendations which I think is noteworthy that was put forward by the Ombudsman, designed to restore the confidence in our system—I know that the leader of the NDP is eager to undermine that confidence, but fortunately, Ontarians are

still buying lottery tickets in good numbers; there has been no drop in sales—one of the important recommendations he made was that we should take the responsibility for the regulatory capacity of OLG, the oversight for ticket sales, away from the OLG and give that responsibility to somebody else. We're going to give it to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission. I've asked Minister Phillips, in his capacity as minister responsible for government services, to take on that responsibility. I know that he has already met with the Ombudsman and gotten some preliminary advice in that regard. He's now moving forward as quickly as possible to take the responsibility for the regulatory oversight of ticket sales away from OLG—who are clearly conflicted—and to assume that responsibility through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Yes, Premier; you're very good at saying we're going to close the barn door after the problem is out there and after the problem has fleeced people out of a lot of money. The question, and the question you refuse to answer, is: What were you doing, what was your minister doing, while innocent people were being fleeced? We know what your political fixers were doing: They were trying to cover up the problem; they were trying to create a public relations strategy that would deny there was a problem.

Premier, we've asked you to hand over the briefing notes of your minister. You refused to do that. We've asked you to explain what these Liberal fixers were doing at the Ontario lottery corporation. You've refused to do that. What do you have to hide, Premier? Why won't you call a judicial investigation into lottery fraud where people were fleeced out of millions of dollars?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think I've laid it out pretty clearly in terms of how this has developed in Ontario over an extended period of time. I've indicated that it has, in fact, gone beyond our borders. It's a problem that has been evidenced in other provinces. I've indicated pretty clearly how a number of substantive recommendations have been brought forward—70, in fact. I've talked about how we've moved ahead. There are already, I think, 17 now in place; there will be another 25 by June.

I find it passing strange. What happened to the NDP's passionate concern about children growing up in poverty? Why won't they celebrate our new Ontario child benefit? What about their concern for the minimum wage? Why won't they celebrate the movement we're making on the minimum wage here in the province of Ontario? What about our investments in developmental services? I thought they had a passing interest in that as well. They don't want to talk about those things because they know that on this side of the House we're doing the right kinds of things for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): The Premier has just talked about people in need. I want to talk to him about the senior citizen who's talking about this \$12.5-million ticket, because I've talked to him

probably 10 times over the last 24 hours. Last night, an associate of mine met with him for 45 minutes to talk to him about the particular situation. I talked this morning with the Ombudsman, Mr. Marin. I talked today with the assistant to Mr. Fantino's office.

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I just wonder, does the Premier have any feeling for the people who have been gypped, defrauded out of their winnings at the Ontario lottery system? Do you have any feelings for these people at all?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: A couple of points on that front: Of course, we have a genuine concern for anybody who feels they have been unfairly treated by Ontario's lottery and gaming system, but more than just that, because they expect us to do more than just feel for them. They expect us to act, they expect us to improve the quality of the system, they expect us to do things that inspire their confidence in the system, and we've been doing that. They did none of that on their watch. Mr. Edmonds arose on their watch.

The second point I want to make is, it would seem to me that if there's a real issue here, this should be a matter referred to police, that it should come under police investigation, and that Mr. Sterling in that regard would not want to speak to it any further, knowing that the police now have been given responsibility for this and they should be free to conduct their investigation.

Mr. Sterling: It's not only about the particular situation with regard to this lottery, which occurred on December 26, 2003.

Interjection.

Mr. Sterling: I have referred it to the police, as I've said in my opening question.

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): Then what are you asking questions about it for?

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member is attempting to place his question. I want to be able to hear the question; other members want to be able to hear the question. It is not helpful when other people feel they need to interject.

The member for Lanark–Carleton.

Mr. Sterling: On March 15, my constituent, a senior citizen, called the lottery corporation. The lottery corporation said, "Do not call the police. Do not call a lawyer. We will phone you back." Nothing happened for a week.

The senior citizen called the lottery corporation again. They gave him a number dealing with his particular case. They asked him where he bought the ticket; he told them where he bought the ticket. He asked them to respond back. They said they would call back; they have never called him back.

Premier, why should we believe the rot is out of the system? Who is running the OLG? Who is in charge? The situation hasn't changed. We've talked about nothing but this in the last—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The member opposite makes a very serious allegation. He's speaking on behalf of a constituent who has been defrauded of \$12.5 million.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): He says.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: He says. That's a lot of money. That's a very serious allegation, and I think that is best referred to the Ontario Provincial Police. I think we should leave it to them now to do their work. I don't think that it's appropriate for us to discuss what steps we ought to be taking now that this matter has been appropriately and responsibly referred to the Ontario Provincial Police.

SMITHS FALLS ECONOMY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, a short while ago I met with the Smiths Falls town council, with labour representatives and with local citizens. The people of Smiths Falls are worried that the closing of the Hershey plant will destroy 500 good jobs. They are also worried that your government's plan to close the Rideau Regional Centre will make the situation worse.

Premier, when these workers ask for your government's help so they can keep their jobs and their homes, what is your government's answer?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): We've done a lot of work on this particular matter. When the news first arose, in fact, I phoned the mayor of Smiths Falls and asked for his best sense of what was happening on the ground there. He explained some of the circumstances for me. I arranged then to get hold of the CEO, I think it was, for Hershey's. I contacted them in Pennsylvania and asked if we could begin a dialogue to talk about the future of that particular plant in Smiths Falls. Subsequent to that, I asked my Minister of Economic Development and Trade to fly to Pennsylvania. She met for a couple of hours with representatives there of Hershey's. I believe that dialogue is still ongoing. And we have an ongoing, very strong communication with the mayor of Smiths Falls and we look forward to continuing to work with him.

Mr. Hampton: Meanwhile, Hershey's continues to work away at their plan for closing the plant.

Premier, you've said that losing manufacturing jobs like this is inevitable. New Democrats disagree. But one thing that is definitely not inevitable is your government's decision to close the Rideau Regional Centre. The families of residents want it to stay open. Workers there want it to stay open. The town most definitely wants it to remain open, given the current circumstance.

Premier, how do you justify your government's decision now to close the Rideau Regional Centre when you know that this will further compound the loss of literally not hundreds of jobs, but now into the thousands of jobs, in a community which has very few other jobs to depend on?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It may be that we have a host of differences that separate the three parties, but we have

historically been of one mind with respect to the value of closing down our regional centres and moving people into community-based living. That's something that all parties have supported in the past. We certainly continue to support that policy.

I understand that the community of Smiths Falls, again, is facing some real economic challenges. We will continue to work with the community, and we're looking for specific invitations to see how we might assist with specific kinds of proposals.

We are going ahead with the hospital construction in that community. I know that's very important to the community. As I said, the minister, I know, has an ongoing connection through her offices with the mayor's office, and we will continue to do everything we possibly can to ensure that there's a bright future for the people of Smiths Falls.

EDUCATION

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, over the last three and a half years, we have built a strong public education system that is supporting student success and raising student achievement. This is a massive contrast to what we saw in the Harris-Eves government, who broke and battered our public schools and allowed our students to fall behind.

In fact, the federal cousins of the members opposite recently gave a tax credit to students in private schools, something their leader currently supports. This is yet again another example of how the members opposite have no vision. We are being held to account by parents and educators and we are delivering real results. From lowering class sizes in the primary grades straight through to helping our students graduate, we are making student achievement a priority.

Minister, can you please let this House know just how we are protecting Ontarians' interests, addressing their education issues and delivering meaningful results in publicly funded education?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I'm happy to respond to the member for London-Fanshawe. I completely agree with him that on this side of the House, we're protecting the interests of Ontarians, we're addressing their issues, we're delivering meaningful results, and we're not supporting taking \$500 million out of our schools through a private school tax credit.

What we are doing—let me talk about some of the results that we're achieving. We've got 12,000 more students graduating from high school over the last two years. The graduation rate has risen from 68% to 73%. We've got 40,000 more grade 10 students passing the provincial literacy test in the last three years; 22,500 more grade 9 students met the standard in provincial math over those three years; 70,000 more grade 3 and 6 students met the provincial standards on the reading, writing and math tests. Some 93% of Ontario's kindergarten to grade 3 classes have 23 students or fewer. That's 450,000 more primary students in smaller classes.

We're delivering results. We're being held to account by the citizens of this province.

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Mr. Ramal: While the Harris-Eves government measured failure, we are measuring success. It's through this measuring of success that we can focus our intention to improve student achievement where it's needed most.

I am sure the people in my riding of London-Fanshawe agree with me that we are protecting their interests, addressing their issues and delivering meaningful results in education. Minister, what do these broad results mean at the local level for the people of my riding of London-Fanshawe?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: When we came to office, what was happening was that kids were losing out on extra-curricular activities, schools were not being repaired because trustees were having to defer maintenance, and money was being taken from the public education system to give to the private system. What we've done is turn that around.

In the Thames Valley District School Board, which is represented by the member for London-Fanshawe: 325 new teachers; 77% of JK to grade 3 class sizes are capped, up from 33% under the previous government; 97% of JK to grade 3 classes are at 23 students or fewer, while only 67% had 23 kids under the Conservatives; average test scores are up 9%; and per pupil funding is up \$1,800.

So overall, the education system in the riding of London-Fanshawe has increased in quality, students are doing better, and the whole system has taken on a better tone.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): To the Premier: For several days now, we've been coming here to question period and we've given you an opportunity to just be direct and forthright and tell us the truth about what it is you knew and when you knew the facts about this lottery scandal. You've left us bewildered, because for some reason you're not willing to be direct.

Yesterday was the latest example, when we asked about an August 2006 meeting attended by Wilson Lee, who is now the chief of staff to the minister responsible for lotteries. Ben Chin says that the meeting never happened—no recollection. Ominous words indeed. But Wilson Lee says that it may have happened. Premier, what is the truth? Can you share the truth with us?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): They're doing a lot of grasping over there and they're really reaching, but I think it's really important for us to come back to first principles and focus on those things which are independent, non-partisan and objective.

The Ombudsman's report is very, very thorough. Something I just noticed: If you take a look inside the front cover of the Ombudsman's report, he lists the team

of people who were working with him. There is a director of the special Ombudsman response team—one individual. There's a lead investigator—one individual. There are then listed six separate investigators, three early resolution officers, and three separate senior counsel persons. To me, that points to a very thorough, exhaustive examination of the issues that found the recommendations which serve the public interest.

Mr. Klees: Premier, you've just made my point again. I asked you a very specific question about conflicting responses from two senior people in your administration, and I asked you what the truth was. You totally ignored my question. That is why people in this province are beginning to seriously doubt your integrity. Why can you not answer a very simple question? Once, Premier, can you answer a straight question with a straight answer? Can you do that for us?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It's always interesting to get a lecture in morality from my friend opposite.

We will continue to do what we think best serves the public interest. There are issues connected with these kinds of concerns that predate 1995. They may go all the way back to 1975, for all we know. A number of these stories have recently surfaced, not only here in Ontario but in other jurisdictions across the country. Different ombudsmen, ombudspeople, in various parts of the country are all conducting their own investigations. We've had a thorough examination of our own here, not only by the Ombudsman, but KPMG, OLG itself, but we've taken a step further. We've referred this matter, unlike anybody else in the country, to our police service. We've asked them to comment on this and to take whatever steps they feel are appropriate. I think that serves the public interest.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, 240 workers in Sudbury found out on Friday that the Affinia plant, where they work, is going to be closed in June and they will all be laid off. These 240 workers have families, they have car payments and they have mortgages. These workers will be devastated by the closure.

The MPP for Nickel Belt wrote to you earlier this year and asked what steps your government was taking to prevent the closure. Premier, has your government done anything to prevent this closure to help sustain these jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Thank you very much, Premier, for referring the question. We have been very proactive in creating jobs, not only in Sudbury but in northern Ontario. When in fact there are layoffs or when businesses decide to close, obviously we take that very seriously and we put a plan into action. Certainly we've

done that, but I find it passing strange that the party that had a record of 1,000 job losses a week will now talk about our record of creating jobs. In fact, in Sudbury since 2003, through the northern Ontario heritage fund, we have invested over \$22 million, which has leveraged an additional \$74 million, creating 1,027 jobs.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, you can spin that line wherever you want in northern Ontario and no one will believe you, because what they know is that 400 jobs were destroyed in Kenora, 520 in Dryden, 1,000 in Thunder Bay, 500 in Red Rock, 300 in Longlac, 400 in Smooth Rock Falls, White River, Chapleau, Espanola, Nairn Centre, and the list goes on.

The Premier said that Ontario's manufacturing sector is not in trouble, that it's simply "in transition." I don't think the "transition" line is going to work at Affinia in Sudbury or anywhere else. My question again is this: Can you tell those workers specifically what the McGuinty government has done to help sustain those jobs?

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: The member opposite, the member from Kenora–Rainy River, the member who purports to be the champion of northern Ontario, wants to compare his record with our record. Let's do a little comparison—and I'm only going to use the northern Ontario heritage fund statistics. I want everyone, especially the people in Kenora–Rainy River, to be reminded that 1,000 jobs a week were lost in Ontario. During their mandate, 5,513 jobs were lost in northeastern Ontario in the resource sector; 6,100 jobs were lost in northwestern Ontario in the resource sector under their watch.

They have a pitiful record. We have a record we are proud of. We're always, always upset with the job losses.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I've got a question today for the Minister of the Environment. There are a number of young people in the audience who I'm sure will be interested in the answer.

Climate change has become the single biggest challenge of our generation. I was encouraged to see that our government is now entering into talks with several US states on greenhouse gas reductions. While the Bush administration seemingly ignores climate change, many US states are leading with initiatives like the cap-and-trade regime on emissions. This program puts an absolute cap on emissions for each of those jurisdictions. Those who are under the cap can trade credits with those who are over the cap.

1510

Minister, while states and provinces can do their best, the real leaders in this need to be at the national level. Can you tell us what you would like to see and what Ontario needs to see from a national climate change strategy?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I want to thank the member for Oakville for his commitment to his community but, most importantly, for his commitment to the environment and tackling the critical issue of climate change.

I'm pleased to talk about what Ontario has said for a long period of time that we want to see in a federal government plan. We want to see established a national cap-and-trade regime. We want the federal program to be fair to all regions of the country and all sectors of the economy. It must use 1990 as a baseline, because industry in Ontario started working as soon as they were aware of the issues and started doing that good work. It's the internationally recognized baseline, and we want to do what the world is doing.

The federal government must also have real reductions, absolute reductions, not so-called intensity-based reductions where we simply see greenhouse gases rise. We're committed to seeing real reductions, and we want the federal government to move in that direction.

Mr. Flynn: It's surprising to learn that the NDP opposes cap-and-trade as an effective way to combat climate change. In fact, Jack Layton said on his website last month, "Capping pollution and providing domestic carbon exchange markets can help create the change we need.... [T]here is agreement that such a mechanism is effective in making emissions reduction attractive for industry." But the provincial NDP on this issue seems out of step with their federal leader. The critic says that carbon trading does not advance the climate change agenda.

The NDP seems to have as many positions on this as they do on the closure of coal plants. The federal NDP says one thing; the provincial NDP says another. Minister, which NDP should we believe?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I cannot possibly answer for the NDP, and that is a question that Ontarians should ask. What I'm focused on is getting real reductions in greenhouse gases here in Ontario. I was very pleased last week when the Premier signalled our interest as a province to enter into some discussions and potentially join the good work being done by states in the United States.

I would say to Ontarians that some very important voices support the role that cap-and-trade can play in a comprehensive climate change strategy. Those include Ken Ogilvie, the executive director of Pollution Probe, and Dale Marshall from the David Suzuki Foundation. That's where we take our advice from. We want to see a comprehensive strategy, and cap-and-trade is certainly part of that. We will make real reductions in this province, and we want to see the federal government move in that direction as well.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Premier. Premier, I recognized your total failure in answering the question from my colleague from Oak Ridges, but it is Holy Week and I remain hopeful.

You wouldn't explain the discrepancy about the August meeting. Perhaps you can shed some light on the October 29 meeting, a meeting attended by Don Guy, Jim

Warren, Warren Kinsella and Bob Lopinski. The only conceivable reason that these four individuals would have to be in the same room would have to be for some kind of Liberal campaign meeting. Will the Premier please explain to the House what he knew about this meeting and what his involvement was, or the involvement of anyone in his office?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Again, to repeat for the umpteenth time, we're not going to take our eye off the ball here. We're going to do what we think meets the needs and serves the interests of the people of Ontario.

There have been some real, legitimate concerns raised with the integrity of the Ontario lottery system. The Ombudsman has taken a good, long, hard look at that with a very competent team of effective people. He's come forward with some very solid recommendations. We intend to move forward on each and every one of those recommendations.

Beyond that, we've also decided that this warrants a review by the police, so we've turned this matter over to the Ontario Provincial Police, and we now leave it to them to determine whether there are any steps that fall within their purview, which they might want to take.

I think that all those things, and acting on each and every one of the recommendations that have been brought forward, serve the public interest.

Mr. Yakabuski: So much for higher expectations.

Premier, you can't expect anyone to believe the assertion that this was an innocent meeting and that these four just happened to find themselves together by coincidence some Sunday in October.

It's a simple question for you to answer, and your refusal is telling: What did you know about this meeting, what was your involvement, what was the involvement of anyone in your office? Why are you refusing to answer this question, or are you participating in a typical Liberal cover-up?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, there's a lot of innuendo over there, a lot of unsubstantiated allegations, a lot of hot air, a lot of heat and a lot of smoke. They may choose to traffic in those particular commodities, but we're going to stay focused on our responsibilities here.

I would have thought the member opposite, for example, would have a passing interest in our previously announced budget, where there's over \$90 billion in expenditures. You would think he would want to celebrate the reduction in the business tax. You would think he would want to celebrate the elimination of the capital tax in Ontario. You would think he would want to celebrate the additional investments in health care and education in his own community. But we'll continue to get that good news out to the people of Ontario.

HAMILTON SPECIALTY BAR

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): A question to the Premier. I was in Hamilton this morning to show my support for the hard-working families at Hamilton Specialty Bar. The steelworkers' union there

has fought hard to sustain workers' pensions and EI benefits. Now they are trying to find a buyer to continue to operate the plant. Three hundred and sixty hard-working families are at risk.

The question they want answered is this: Why isn't the McGuinty government at the table fighting to sustain those good-paying Hamilton jobs? Where is the McGuinty government's leadership on this issue?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I want to tell my friend the leader of the third party that we now have found the letter that was sent by William Baker, president of Local 4752 of the United Steelworkers. On behalf of the Premier, my office will be getting back to Mr. Baker to talk about what might be done in those circumstances.

I want to reiterate what I said yesterday: This company is now subject to the provisions of the CCAA, the credit protection act, and under those circumstances, I am going to restrict my comments very severely to make sure that I do not in any way interfere with the court process.

Mr. Hampton: This has been going on for some time—this didn't just happen last week—and that's what some of the steelworkers who were there wanted to know.

You see, over Christmas they watched as the McGuinty government was very quick to give the Premier a \$40,000 pay raise. These workers have been struggling to sustain these jobs for some time, and so they ask this question: While they've been struggling to sustain and reposition these jobs, where has the McGuinty government been?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: We have been in virtually every community in this province where there is a downturn, particularly in manufacturing, whether it's in Thunder Bay, in Hamilton, in southwestern Ontario or in Smiths Falls.

In particular, we have provided special assistance to the city of Hamilton, because they are having a series of very special problems. In the budget I presented, we provided an additional \$12 million in assistance to the city of Hamilton, the only city in the province that received that kind of special assistance.

1520

The city of Hamilton, as well, is going to have the advantage of special provisions for tax reductions under the business education tax. I can tell my friend the leader of the third party that in situations like this, the strength of this government is that it is there to listen and to respond in the best way possible in the interests of the very workers my friend was referring to.

TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): My question today is for the Minister of Transportation. As you may know, my constituents depend on Highway 7

both to commute back and forth to work between Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo and just to be able to get around the region. It's a primary corridor. Of course, the Wellington and Waterloo areas have grown dramatically in the last few years. The Highway 7 corridor between Guelph and Waterloo is now up to 21,000 cars per day. As you can imagine, my constituents and also the constituents of the member for Waterloo-Wellington and my colleague from Kitchener Centre—a number of us—have been very concerned about getting this highway rebuilt. In fact, the discussion has been going on since 1980 about where the route should go. Our government has got the route in place. Can you update us on what—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I am absolutely delighted to respond. I'd like to thank the member for Guelph-Wellington and also the member for Kitchener Centre for their advocacy on this particular route. We have in fact completed the EA. We have done consultation with the First Nations and with the Mississaugas of New Credit, and we have moved forward. The EA is done, and we are now ready to go into design phase and property purchasing, which means that the route has been determined and we can finally move forward.

This is an incredible region that has an opportunity for economic development within the next 20 to 25 years. It is probably the fastest-growing development in North America. The opportunities that lie there depend very much on their transportation system. So it's our responsibility to work very closely with the municipalities, with the cities and with the region on how we can actually make that happen. This is one of the good examples of—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mrs. Sandals: This is absolutely great news, and I know that my colleague from Kitchener Centre, my other colleagues across the floor and my constituents—

Interjection.

Mrs. Sandals: Yes, the member from Waterloo-Wellington is looking very happy. This has been an all-party happiness event, and we're just delighted with the news. I know my constituents, particularly those who live along the Highway 7 corridor, are delighted that the congestion is getting off their front door and on to a new, proper four-lane highway.

But, Minister, you spoke about looking at the opportunities to move forward with transportation in the region and looking at an integrated approach to dealing with the challenge of increased congestion. Could you tell us a little bit about how you're looking at that integrated approach in our region?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: There is no question we're here at the table at the Kitchener-Waterloo transit project. As you know, in this government we put public transit exactly on the same level as every other form of transit and give it the due that it deserves, which means the money is on the table. We have committed our third toward involvement in the technical process, and we are

prepared to sit down, as I said, and work with this incredible region around what they're going to do in the future for economic development.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would bring members' attention to a visitor in the public gallery west: Chris Hodgson, the member for Victoria-Haliburton in the 35th and 36th Parliaments and the member for Victoria-Haliburton-Brock in the 37th Parliament.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: We would also want to point out that Chris Hodgson is now with the Ontario Mining Association. Representatives from the Ontario Mining Association are in the public gallery as well, and we invite all members to meet the miners from 5:30 to 7:30.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): "Whereas hundreds of innocent purchasers of lottery tickets have been scammed of their winnings of as much as \$100 million; and

"Whereas the Ombudsman has found in a mere 90 days 'to piece together five cases where retailers claiming tickets were liars, they lied about being retailers, they lied about where they got the tickets'; and

"Whereas throughout the Ombudsman's investigation Minister Caplan, responsible for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Commission, has stated that he saw nothing, he heard nothing, he knew nothing and he did nothing; and

"Whereas Minister Caplan, who has failed in his responsibilities in protecting innocent lottery purchases against the lottery corporation, refuses to resign;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We petition Dalton McGuinty to fire Minister David Caplan for his negligence and incompetence in failing to protect the defrauded lottery ticket purchasers of Ontario."

As I agree with the petition, I sign my name thereto.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I have a petition today that I'm presenting on behalf of the member from Niagara Falls:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

"Whereas Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

"Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools."

I sign this petition and add my name to it and send it with page Carolyn.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows. I might add that I was supposed to have a question today, but this will suffice, I suppose:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

I'm pleased to sign this on behalf of my constituents.

GRAVESITES OF FORMER PREMIERS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a petition from a number of residents of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premiers of Ontario have made enormous contributions over the years in shaping the Ontario of today; and

"Whereas, as a result, the final resting places of the 18 deceased Premiers are among the most historically

significant sites in the province, but have yet to be officially recognized; and

"Whereas, were these gravesites to be properly maintained and marked with an historical plaque and a flag of Ontario, these locations would be a source of pride to the communities where these former Premiers lie buried, and provide potential points of interest for visitors;

"Now therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 25, an act that will preserve the gravesites of the former Premiers of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall affix my signature and send it with Alex.

1530

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition. Actually, I had a question yesterday, but this will have to suffice:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

I affix my name in full support.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

"Whereas Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

"Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools."

This was brought to me on behalf of the member for Niagara Falls. I agree with it and sign it here for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

It is signed by many people from my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I've got a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program."

I'd like to affix my signature and thank the member for Niagara Falls.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have here a petition that I had the privilege of picking up in my office in Woodstock this morning, where the people are coming in on a regular basis to sign this petition because they do have great concerns about the issue. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

I affix my signature as I agree with the petition.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it's signed by several dozen people, all from the Niagara Falls area. I'd certainly like to thank my seat mate, the member for Niagara Falls, for his efforts in collecting the signatures. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered.

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most people and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program."

This is an excellent petition. I'm pleased to affix my signature and to ask to page Ashley to carry it for me.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):
"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

"Whereas Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

"Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it. I will have page Jacob deliver it to the table.

CAFETERIA FOOD GUIDELINES

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas childhood obesity rates have tripled over the past two decades in Canada; and

"Whereas the annual amount of money the health care system uses to mend preventable obesity-related illnesses is \$1.6 billion; and

"Whereas the Ontario food premises regulation only provides safety policies that must be followed by the

Ontario school boards' cafeterias, but no defined regulations regarding the nutrition standard of the food being served at the cafeterias; and

"Whereas there is a need to encourage nutritious standards in high school cafeterias that support Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating; and

"Whereas the private member's bill proposed by Nupur Dogra under Making the Grade and her fellow students at Iroquois Ridge High School will require all Ontario school boards' cafeterias to adopt and abide [by] healthier eating standards (similar to Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating) that will govern the food choices;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the private member's bill that will amend the Ontario school boards' cafeteria food guidelines to follow healthier food standards in all Ontario high school cafeterias."

1540

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): I want to thank my colleague the member from Niagara Falls for allowing me to present this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

"Whereas Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

"Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools."

I also agree with this and I add my signature to it as well.

OPPOSITION DAY

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I move, that, in the opinion of this House, the Premier has failed to ensure the highest level of integrity and responsibility for his ministers, the most recent example being when

lottery-playing Ontario citizens were ripped off and the minister responsible sat idly by and did nothing;

That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government as a whole has breached the faith of the people of Ontario, has failed to protect their interests, failed to address the urgent issues facing them and their pocket-books, and failed to deliver meaningful results; and

That, in the opinion of this House, the Premier should start upholding standards of integrity, responsibility, and accountability.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Tory has moved opposition day motion number 1. The leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Tory: I could talk to the second paragraph of this motion, with respect to failing to protect the interests of Ontario citizens, and probably cite any one of a hundred different examples. I could talk about failing to address the urgent issues facing them, many of which I did deal with in my response to the budget: no jobs plan, no addressing of the emergency room crisis, more students than ever studying in portables and so on, failure to deliver meaningful results; there are a hundred different things we could talk about there. But what I want to talk about today is really what the Premier has not done with respect to establishing some kind of reasonable standard that the people of Ontario, I think, have the right to expect with respect to what happens when the going gets tough, what happens when things are difficult, what happens when big issues that are of interest to the people of Ontario arise in a kind of crisis environment.

It's interesting, because I heard somebody say last week that when the going gets tough, Dalton gets going. The thing is that he gets going away from the House, away from responsibility, ducking and denying and dithering and blaming somebody else and so forth and so on. What we don't have is any kind of standard at all that I think is the reasonable kind that people would expect in the province of Ontario.

It was interesting to hear the comments of Hershell Ezrin. Hershell Ezrin is a very thoughtful man who's respected in all corners of all parties in politics in this province and in this country. He was on *The Agenda* on TVOntario the other night and he said something that was very short, very concise but very true: that when you're dealing with a standard like this—in this case, we're talking about that standard of behaviour, that standard of accountability, that standard of taking responsibility, that standard of integrity—the standard is set by the boss. That's what Mr. Ezrin said, and Mr. Ezrin was right.

So what standard do we see from Premier Dalton McGuinty when it comes to these kinds of matters, which I admit are difficult, because they deal with difficult issues? They're not necessarily simple issues. They often involve people and difficult decisions about people. So they're not simple. That's why they're the real test of leadership, because they are difficult.

We can go back to the Takhar matter, the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. What did we have

there? We had for the first time, I believe, in the history of Ontario a sitting cabinet minister who was found in breach of the integrity act—the first time in the history of Ontario. You would have thought that that was an event that required a singular response since it, in and of itself, was a singular event in the history of this province. The Integrity Commissioner found that the minister in question had engaged in egregious and reckless conduct. So it wasn't just one of these inadvertent oversights; it was egregious and reckless conduct. The same minister and the same government made a total sham of the freedom-of-information process, because we attempted to get some information that would help get to the bottom of what really went on in that instance and we were just stonewalled at all turns.

Frankly, Mr. Takhar sits in cabinet today as the Minister of Small Business. He was never asked to leave the cabinet. He never took the decision himself to leave the cabinet, which he should have done. So I think we began to see there what the standard was that Premier Dalton McGuinty would bring to these kinds of things: no accountability, no responsibility, no consequences if you do anything wrong or if anything bad happens on your watch and that the operative directions given to all concerned—stonewall. Stonewall, and if that doesn't work, try stonewalling.

I guess I should say by way of an admission here, we should have known better. When the lottery scandal came up—and none of us knew, of course, it was going to come up, on any side of this House—we should have known better. We should have remembered that a leopard doesn't change its spots.

Let's look at the history of the lottery scandal. The April e-mails—there were e-mails in April, six months before this minister and this Premier and everybody else associated with this said, "We knew nothing; we saw nothing; we didn't ask anybody any questions. We just sat on our cans in our respective offices and we did nothing." As I said in question period earlier today, when they say they did nothing, that's the part that does have the ring of truth about it; there's no question about that. But the operative instructions there, the standard set by the boss: play dumb. I know there are e-mails and they're back and forth with senior people in senior positions of this government tied directly to the minister's office and the Premier's office, but the operating standard: play dumb. I don't know who got those e-mails, who read them—we were all busy that day.

Then we move to the August meeting, where the Premier's office says, in respect to a matter that involved people being ripped off and defrauded of their money across this province, "Don't worry, it's just a communications problem." What do we have there? Well, we have on the one hand Mr. Wilson Lee. He has various people speaking for him now. It's incredible that you have a person who's a chief of staff—after all, what is that? It's just an adviser to a minister—and he's now got an official spokesperson, hired at great expense, in the Premier's office—a defeated Liberal candidate, I might add,

who's going to be running again in the next election. He's now the official spokesperson for the chief of staff, and we have two different answers being given as to this August meeting. One is: "I have no recollection," which, by the way, were the same words used by one of the most famous figures in the Watergate scandal, at the hearings that took place back in 1973. The other one is, "I'm not sure if that meeting took place or not." So on the one hand, his spokesperson says he has no recollection. He, himself, says he's not sure if there was a meeting. There is a difference between the two, they don't have their story straight, but anyway, the bottom line is, no accountability, no responsibility, nothing.

In October, after they get caught, what do they do? They convene a meeting of all of their best spin doctors to try to spin a line. "Let's put something out there that explains this away in some way or other: These people win more often because they buy more tickets."

In March, what do they do? Mr. Brown is asked to walk the plank. We have no reports of anybody else who has been asked to pay any price, including, of course, in particular, the minister—the minister, to whom the board reports, who is responsible for the affairs of this. Mr. McGuinty, the Premier, was saying yesterday that this is an arms-length corporation, yet he's standing and in the same breath saying, "We brought in the changes; we told them to do this; we've reformed that," and so forth and so on. As I said yesterday, these are the shortest arms in the history of humankind that this government had wrapped all around this corporation. They've got people in there left, right and centre, sent in by them at all hours of the day and night—summer meetings, Sunday meetings and all the rest.

April—what do they do in April? They take the initiative to actually see that some other outside police service is called in. Did they take the initiative to see that an outside police service was called in when there were apparently some issues the OPP couldn't investigate? No, they didn't. They waited for Commissioner Julian Fantino to do it, and thank God he did; he stood up and did the right thing when this government wouldn't act. I commend the member for Leeds–Grenville and the member for Simcoe North and the others who stood in there with the Progressive Conservative caucus and continued to insist that there was a need for someone else to look at some aspects of this. That's not the fault of the OPP; it's the fault of this government, that lacked the guts to acknowledge that there was a need for an outside police service to be brought in.

So once again the standard is set by the boss: Send in the spin doctors. There's the standard set by the boss, Premier McGuinty.

Develop the diversionary tactics. There's the standard set by the boss, Dalton McGuinty.

Pay people huge sums of money when they leave and hope that they remain silent. There's the standard set by the boss, Premier Dalton McGuinty.

Leave it to the Commissioner of the OPP to show any leadership that's needed when it comes to bringing in an

outside police service. There's the standard set by the boss, Dalton McGuinty.

Do nothing whatsoever to freeze or try and get back \$12.5 million the Ombudsman says found its way into the wrong hands, even when a man shows up and says that money might belong to him. There's the standard set by the boss, Premier Dalton McGuinty.

Tar every retailer in Ontario with the dirty brush of saying they have all proven to be people who can't be trusted with the lottery or anything else. There's the standard set by the boss, Premier Dalton McGuinty.

1550

Refuse to allow an independent investigation, an open, independent investigation to get to the bottom of all this and investigate things that no one is investigating today, including the role of the Premier's office and the minister's office—refuse to allow that investigation. There is the standard set by the boss, Premier Dalton McGuinty.

Refuse to ask your minister to be accountable and to resign his office, as parliamentary convention would suggest. There is the standard set by the boss, Premier Dalton McGuinty.

Refuse to make available the documents and the e-mails and the briefing notes and the calendars that would show who in the McGuinty government knew what, when they knew it and what they did about it. There is the standard, in refusing to make that information public, set by the boss, Premier Dalton McGuinty.

That is no standard at all. That is no leadership at all. That is weak leadership. That is an abdication of leadership. The standard set by the boss should be better. That's because the people of Ontario deserve better, the people who buy the lottery tickets deserve better, the employees of the lottery corporation deserve better and, quite frankly, the members of this Legislature deserve better than what they are getting from this Premier.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? Is there any further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): It's passing strange that as you call for participation in this debate, the government members sit on their fannies and refuse to participate. I think my colleague just said it right. It's the same as Minister Caplan, who clearly sat on his fanny while everything was falling around his ears with respect to the lottery corporation and the potentially thousands of Ontarians who were ripped off of their winnings through ill-gotten gains—and who knows how? But we've certainly heard the Ombudsman suggest that it may have been through the actions of a limited number of retailers.

I want to talk about standards, and I'd especially like to speak briefly about ministerial responsibility. That's one of the key factors. Our leader, Mr. Tory, talked about Mr. Takhar, an earlier example of the lack of standards within the McGuinty government when it comes to the integrity and the performance of ministers of the McGuinty cabinet. We all know about that situation where he was found guilty of egregious and reckless conduct by the Integrity Commissioner. Yet Premier McGuinty

adopted the Jean Chrétien mode of dealing with these crises within government by putting your head down and weathering it, hoping the press gallery loses interest, and if the press gallery loses interest, the opposition will lose interest and the public will lose interest, and we can go on, business as usual.

Regrettably, that's what happened in this situation. Mr. Takhar was moved out of that particular ministry that he was in, the Ministry of Transportation. In fact, this man, found guilty of egregious and reckless conduct, was rewarded with the creation of a new ministry, at taxpayers' expense. And of course, if he's doing anything of significant benefit to Ontarians, we are certainly being kept hidden from it. He sits in here and warms that chair, but beyond that, we're not sure—other than collecting his ministerial salary and driving in his government-paid, chauffeur-driven limousine. Beyond that, we're certainly unsure.

Now we have this situation with Minister Caplan, who has declined to do the honourable thing, and his leader, Mr. McGuinty, has declined to do what should be the responsible thing in his role as leader of the government and leader of the executive council. He has failed completely to require this individual to step aside while this cloud hangs over his head.

I was going through a book called *Responsible Government*, which was published by the Canadian Centre for Management Development and talks about the convention of ministerial responsibilities. There are a number of tenets here which would apply, but I'll just go through a couple of them. "Ministers are individually responsible to the Legislature for the powers Parliament has assigned to the portfolio each holds," and—this is a key one—"Ministers are individually responsible for their own actions, as well as for the actions" of their subordinates.

We know in this situation that at least six months prior to the revelations on the Fifth Estate television program, Minister Caplan's staff were advised of problems within the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. Nothing was done to address this situation. The minister says he didn't know anything about this, didn't know about meetings going on, didn't know his staff were privy to the problems within the corporation that he has responsibility for. All of this begs the question, where was he? If he wasn't doing his job, if the staff weren't doing the job, where does the buck stop? This is a man who has to accept some degree of responsibility, but he does not want to. He comes in here and reads lines prepared by some high-priced Liberal consultant. We have to assume it's someone like Warren Kinsella, who has been party to all of this exercise in trying to cover up what has really been going on here and to minimize the problems and discredit the media that revealed it and, by extension, discredit Bob Edmonds, the senior who, regrettably and unfortunately, just passed away this past week. They made efforts to discredit his claim that he was cheated out of his rightful winnings through the lottery system. That's the kind of effort that has been undertaken by this minister and this government.

My leader talked about the key Liberal insiders. When we talk about insiders, this is key. We look at Don Guy, the former chief of staff to Premier McGuinty and now the head of their re-election team; Jim Warren, the former communications chief in Mr. McGuinty's office; and Warren Kinsella, the highly priced chief spinmeister of the Liberal Party of Ontario. These are the guys who got together on a Sunday and devised a strategy to try to discredit this, to minimize the impact, and to confuse and deceive the people of Ontario through their actions.

This is the sort of thing that we have tried to address as an official opposition. As Her Majesty's loyal opposition, we have a responsibility to raise these issues and draw very clear pictures, if you will, of the linkages with the Premier's office and the minister's office with respect to what has happened here and the attempts to minimize and keep this from public view. This is very important.

The opposition has limited numbers of tools available to it to try to continue to address this issue. The Premier and his ministers refuse to answer our questions in this House. Last night, we rang bells on a police complaints legislation bill before the House to try to get the government to do the right thing about an independent investigation, which they refused to do. During the ringing of those bells, Commissioner Fantino of the OPP agreed there should be an independent investigation. He was the one who responded to it. This government, this Premier, this minister, continually refused to address what was clearly a conflict that should have been addressed by the government.

There are certain things that we've heard over the years about a former Premier. They've tried to demonize Premier Harris. But I just want to talk about three things:

—Leadership: He always showed true leadership, whether you agreed with him or not.

—He kept his promises. Compare that record to Dalton McGuinty's.

—He respected the convention of ministerial responsibility.

I was one of the people who stepped aside when there was a suggestion that a young offender may have been identified when his mother was introduced in this Legislature during a throne speech. As a government, we consistently respected the convention of ministerial responsibility, something that this Liberal government and this Liberal Premier have consistently ignored, insulting the history of this place. It's truly unfortunate.

We are going to continue to press this case. This is a scandal with roots that extend into the Premier's office and the office of the minister of lotteries, and we're not going to let this die. We're going to continue to press and do our job as Her Majesty's official opposition.

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Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): I guess you can't defend the indefensible, and that's why the members opposite aren't getting up to defend their minister right now.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Where are your notes, Lisa?

Ms. MacLeod: The notes are on their way.

The term “minister” comes from a Latin word meaning “servant,” yet it seems to the crowd opposite that it actually means “snake-oil salesman.”

I might be the youngest member in the Legislature, but I’m old enough to remember a few names such as Allan Grossman, Frank Miller and Allan Lawrence. Although I did not always agree with these people’s policies—like Robert Nixon, Murray Elston, Andy Scott and even Elinor Caplan—they always did the right thing and put the people before their party. These were ministers who led by example. They stood up for the policies they represented and were ministers who were statesmen and spokespeople for their government.

Sometimes being a good minister means standing up, taking responsibility and stepping aside during times of upheaval. When their integrity or conduct is under question, they also step aside. History has shown that, more often than not, those ministers who have the most integrity, who have the guts to step aside during these times, are exonerated and their integrity is restored. On the other hand, ministers and government members who have fought tooth and nail, who resist all public suggestion and who deny and deny, end up on the other side of history. Alfonso Gagliano and Warren Kinsella’s former boss David Dingwall come to mind when I think of these people.

Since the fall of 2003, Ontarians have seen ministers of the government, including the Premier, who have broken the law, betrayed the public trust, misled the public, made derogatory comments about northerners—and now a minister who does not seem to know what the word “responsibility” means. Ontarians deserve better, but instead they got Lottogate—not exactly a shining example of ministerial integrity.

I came across this article on Friday from the Toronto Star. It was from Linwood Barclay, and I want to read a little bit of it:

“It’s time for an episode of our favourite TV crime drama, David Caplan, Lottery Investigator. In tonight’s instalment, beautiful Winona Sultry comes to see Caplan with a problem that’s right up his alley.”

Sultry goes on to say, “Mr. Caplan? Excuse me, Mr. Caplan?”

Caplan says, “Oh, sorry, ma’am, I guess I nodded off at my desk here for a moment. What can I do for you?”

“... My name is Winona Sultry, and I want to hire you. I believe my \$500,000 winning lottery ticket has been swiped by a lottery retailer.

“... Well, that’s terrible! Let me just take some notes here so I can ... so I can ...”

“... Mr. Caplan? Hello?”

“... Whoa. Can you believe that? I nodded off again. So, what we need is a plan. We need to catch him in the act.”

So anyway, he eventually tells her to start buying more lottery tickets, and so, “\$738,000 later, Winona Sultry returns to Caplan’s office with a new, winning ticket” of \$50.

That’s what Mr. Caplan was doing in this little article. Then he takes the side of the lottery retailer and sticks it to poor Winona Sultry.

But the frustration of the people—a minister who has been asleep at the switch, who is standing up sleeping, is very frustrating because, as you know, Mr. Speaker, in the spring of 2005, at least 50 media outlets across Canada reported on Lottogate. That was in the spring of 2005.

If the minister claims he didn’t know a thing about Lottogate until October 15, 2006—that’s a full 10 months later—we have to ask: Was he asleep at the switch or did he just not care?

It’s all too obvious that, unfortunately for the people of Ontario, some members of the McGuinty government are either oblivious to the meaning of integrity or are not choosing to show any.

Since 2003, as I mentioned, we have seen ministers act without the bounds of their public office. Instead of integrity, we have seen the same Liberal advisers who were called in front of the Gomery commission giving public relations advice to the OLG. It seems like an odd choice to me, because Adscam was not exactly a stellar and winning moment for Warren Kinsella’s former bosses.

Just as I close—because I know that many of my colleagues would actually like to join the debate, unlike the members opposite—I think John Tory knows a thing or two about integrity, and that’s why I’m proud to serve under John Tory and the Progressive Conservative Party. That’s why I think today that this debate is very critical for the integrity of this place and the integrity of democracy.

I encourage other members, even the members of the Liberal Party, to actually stand up and debate this motion.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): It gives me great pride to be able to rise in the House today for what is ostensibly my inaugural speech in this place. Given that, my remarks will be rather personal. I just want my colleagues here in the House to be aware of that.

Over the past two and a half weeks, I’ve been given a number of opportunities to rise for questions—earlier this week, in fact—and other shorter interjections, which I have tried to use as effectively as possible. I hope that I’ve been able to fit in with the environment of this place.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): You’re doing fine.

Mr. Ferreira: My learned friend from Niagara Centre says I’ve been doing fine.

I will say that if there is one advantage to being a member of a small but growing caucus, it’s that my colleagues, some of whom have served here for a very long period of time and are in fact distinguished members, have thrown me into the deep end headfirst right from the beginning. For that, I’m immensely appreciative, even when it seems at times that it’s a trial by fire.

I’m proud to be in this House for a host of important reasons. I’ll expand upon those during my comments, and I ask for the indulgence of my colleagues, especially

those from the official opposition, who have tabled a quite important motion here this afternoon. My comments will stray somewhat from that motion, and for that I ask for their understanding.

I want to begin by thanking the good people of York South–Weston for entrusting me with their vote on February 8 and for sending me to this place to be their voice and their champion. I hope to do them proud.

York South–Weston is a very special place. It's a place where men, women and children from all over the world come to start new lives. It's a place with unique, special communities with long, strong histories and traditions that are safeguarded by successive generations. I want to spend some time talking about some of these communities.

One of them that is integral to the health and well-being of my riding is the village of Weston. Yes, despite the spread of urban density, the village has managed to maintain many of its attributes, particularly in its residential section.

For those who do not know, Weston is a place that grew out of the Humber River. In a brief article by Cherri Hurst, of the Weston Historical Society, we learn of the transformation of Weston over the ages. I'm going to read from her article:

"Majestic oak, maple and elm trees stand tall as they line the Carrying Place Trail. Animals such as deer, bear and wolves roam freely and the salmon struggles its way through the powerful waters of the Humber River. Members of the Ojibwa tribe pay their respects to fallen comrades with two burial grounds.

"Then, years later, around 1792, John Countryman, a member of a survey crew sent to map out the Humber River, is so pleased with the oak and pine bush that he builds a sawmill on the west bank. More settlers follow, attracted by the 20-foot drop in the river that affords excellent power for saw and grist mills.

"The days turn into years, and in spite of fires and floods the hamlet is now an incorporated village. Industries owned by generations of the same family thrive. Schools, churches and a handsome two-storey town hall attest to the village's motto, 'Equal justice for all.' After the turn of the century, you can walk down Main Street by the light of the new electric street lamps. You can also peruse the books in the new public library or enjoy a round of four-hole golf" at what would become the Weston Golf and Country Club, a very famous club indeed. "By 1915, the busy and bustling village is now a town. Time marches on, as do the soldiers that go off to two World Wars. Hurricane Hazel releases her fury on the town in such a way as to mark it forever.

"The love and pride that Westonites have for their town, their homes and their neighbourhood has shone through in good times and bad."

That was from an article by Cherri Hurst, of the Weston Historical Society. Indeed, it is that love and pride of Weston that draws many who left years and decades before to return to their home village.

The community of Mount Dennis, located just south of Weston along Weston Road, is another place with a

powerful legacy. Mount Dennis was, at one time, a great hub of industry. Perched at the top of a hill centred around Weston Road and Eglinton Avenue West, Mount Dennis features magnificent views and vistas of what has become downtown Toronto.

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Unfortunately, many of the industrial jobs have been lost, especially over the past two decades. Most recently, Kodak, which had a sprawling campus at Black Creek and Eglinton, became a victim of technological innovation and shut down its plant in Mount Dennis, a plant that in its heyday employed thousands of locals in very well paying jobs. The Kodak lands will soon be transformed into commercial and retail space and provide a new type of employment—not as well paying but a new type of employment. It will signal the end of one chapter in the history of Mount Dennis but the beginning of another.

Mount Dennis is a place blessed by its proximity to natural beauty. The nearby Eglinton Flats—and I invite all members to come out some day soon—is a vibrant and verdant oasis set smack dab in the middle of the big city. The pond is home to many fish, where young anglers willing to try their luck on a warm Sunday evening cast their lure into the water. It's a place for community picnics, sporting events and quiet reflection among nature's beauty.

South of Mount Dennis is the neighbourhood of Lambton Park, a place where the homes are mostly modest but where residents are house-proud. Local residents see their neighbourhood as a hidden jewel within close proximity to downtown Toronto but with affordable real estate and easy access to the rest of our great capital city here in Ontario.

Somewhat east of Lambton Park is the community of Silverthorn. Silverthorn features an incredible mix of cultural diversity among its snake-like streets, which climb up and down Eglinton Hill in the west end of Toronto. Many of the homes were built by hand by the original owners and inhabitants and passed from one generation to another. You can knock on 20 doors in Silverthorn and speak to residents from 20 different countries of origin. It's that diversity that makes Silverthorn stand out.

North of Silverthorn are residential communities centred around streets like Gulliver, Maple Leaf, Falstaff, Rustic and others, and again, the overwhelming feature is the diversity of the incredible people who call these neighbourhoods home.

These are people who come to York South–Weston to pursue their dreams. Some are descendants of those who came 200 years and 300 years ago, others came in the 1940s and 1950s, and still many others have come more recently. They have come here to contribute and to make a better life for themselves and their children.

My own background speaks to this. I am very proud to be the first member of this House of Azorean heritage. I know that in our community, my victory on February 8 was a momentous occasion. I am the third one of Portu-

guese origin, and I want to salute my two friends who have been here before me: first, the member from Mississauga East, who was born on the Portuguese mainland, and the former member for Mississauga East, Mr. DeFaria, who also served in the previous government as a minister of the crown and who was born in one of the former Portuguese colonies. We are the three, and as I mentioned, I am the first born in the Azores.

I mentioned that I would get into some personal stories about my own background. I would not be here today if it were not for the tremendous determination of my maternal grandmother, Lourdes Furtado. My grandmother was left a young widow with five young children, and in 1950s Portugal this made life a daunting and difficult journey indeed. The house my grandmother and her children, including my mom, grew up in had a dirt floor, with no running water.

It was from those trying conditions that my grandmother decided she wanted to give her kids a better life. She had a brother who had come to Canada in the early 1950s. He was among the very first Portuguese migrants who came to Canada in the early 1950s who worked away and really helped build our city and our province in the construction sector. My grandmother wrote to her brother, who was here in the west end of Toronto, asking if there was any way that she and the kids could join him and his family here. It was tough. My great-uncle was a labourer. He was supporting a wife and kids of his own. But they got together, I suppose as siblings do, and they devised a plan, and they started to execute that plan.

First, he sponsored my grandmother and her youngest child, who happened to be my uncle Joe, and they arrived in Canada in 1965. They settled in Brampton, a place that would eventually become my Canadian hometown. For the next 14 years, my grandmother Lourdes toiled away as a cleaner of homes and offices; my, how she toiled and struggled to make ends meet. Every two or three years she would have enough money to be able to sponsor and bring over another child. First it was my uncle John, then it was my aunt Connie, and then my other aunt, Dora. Every two or three years, another one would arrive.

By 1979, my mom, Filomena, who was the eldest of the five Furtado kids, was next. By then, she was a 29-year-old housewife, married to a man named Gilberto Ferreira and with two small kids of her own: a four-year-old daughter, and what I would describe as a bright, precocious six-year-old named Paul, who spent most of his days running through the pineapple plantations that his dad's family happened to manage and to run, not knowing at all what would be in his future.

As a result of my grandmother's immense dedication and sacrifice, my mom, my dad, my sister and I left the island of São Miguel for good in March 1979. We landed at Mirabel airport in Montreal, which we know was a receiving point for many new Canadians from all over the world. I vividly recall stepping off that Air Canada jet, my dad clutching me tightly, with these strange white things falling from the sky. They were snowflakes, and I reached out to try and catch some. I would later learn

from my cousins and relatives that that's what we call "snow" in English. Mr. Speaker and my colleagues here, if you can only imagine the sense of awe and wonderment in the eyes of a six-year-old child that day.

Our journey to a new home and a new future would end in Brampton. As I mention Brampton, I think it's important to pay special tribute to one of Brampton's most distinguished and important residents, Mr. Davis, a former Premier who I know played a key role in the career path of the present leader of the official opposition. Mr. Davis is someone who has been described by many as the education Premier, and it is largely as a result of the education system that he built in this province that my sister and I were able to so quickly integrate into our new home.

It wasn't easy. It certainly wasn't easy for my parents, who arrived with very little, aside from a couple of suitcases brimming with a few prized possessions and two little kids. We arrived in Brampton, and for the first year we lived in subsidized housing on Ardglen Drive in Brampton. We were very, very grateful to have a roof over our heads.

One week after arriving, my dad took a job at a steel plant north of Toronto. He became a proud steelworker, and to this day, 28 years and three weeks later, he works at that same steel plant. In what was perhaps my proudest moment on election night, my dad, who was working the night shift that night—he is the maintenance guy at his plant, so if something breaks down, he's got to be there to fix it—was able to get away from his shift to join me at my victory celebration. It's something that will live with me forever, that he was able to partake in such an important moment.

My mom took a job in a poultry plant. If any of you in this House have been in a poultry plant, it is not the most ideal of working conditions, but there she was on the line, working for more than a decade until her back gave out and she became an injured worker and joined the multitudes of injured workers across this province who ask their government for adequate support and protection.

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Throughout those years, my parents scrimped and saved and sacrificed. Because of that, within a year or shortly thereafter, they were able to buy their first home in Brampton. Shortly after that, a third child arrived, my youngest sister, Linda. We were able to succeed. Indeed, we flourished and began to see the potential and the rich opportunity provided by this great new country of ours, Canada. To this day, when I speak to my sisters and now to my nephew and my two nieces, life in Canada has become a treasured gift for us. We will never forget the opportunity this country has given us.

My parents worked and upgraded houses, as many immigrants do. They were able to send their three kids off to university. In fact, in my entire family, I was the very first to go and receive a university education. I—

Applause.

Mr. Ferreira: Thank you, my friend from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

Upon graduating from the Carleton University school of journalism, I felt a very strong impulse to give back, to repay what had been given to me. I embarked upon a professional career, but I also was bitten by the political bug. In fact, my first campaign for public office was in Brampton in 1997 where, as a 24-year-old, I became one of the first Portuguese-Canadians to seek federal office. In that election, I was not successful, but I thought I did well enough that I would continue to pursue it. I had been bitten by the bug, and there was no turning back. Politics became a passion, and one which I pursued unwaveringly—some would argue perhaps foolishly, but here I am in any case. I pursued it with much vigour—

Interjection.

Mr. Ferreira: That's right. I think my friend from Niagara Centre looks great after 17 years here, and I think he's got at least 17 more. The intervening—

Mr. Kormos: With medicine today—

Mr. Ferreira: He's got more hair than I do, so he scores on that.

In those intervening 10 years, I ran for office a couple of more times, and I kept getting closer and closer. I was determined to follow my path, and I received an incredible amount of support from my family and loved ones, including my beloved partner, Tim, who has been with me on this journey every step of the way for the past eight and a half years. I know the toll it's taken on our personal lives, and I believe that all members in this place also recognize the toll that running for office and holding elected office takes on our family lives and on our family responsibilities. We all owe a debt of gratitude to our family members for supporting us as we pursue our efforts to serve the public.

My political journey, or at least this chapter in my political journey—and I hope there are many chapters beyond this particular one—climaxed on February 8, when I was elected as the new member of provincial Parliament for the great riding of York South–Weston. I realize that I have some awfully big shoes to fill. My riding is one that has been represented in this place by some great parliamentarians. Indeed it was represented here by the first very leader of the Ontario Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, CCF, a man by the name of Ted Jolliffe. York South was also represented by a member of great stature who served in this place for almost three decades continuously. As he still likes to remind me—he says to me, “Paul, I won nine elections straight and they were all by bigger margins than your margin on February 8.” Of course, that's Donald C. MacDonald, who served here from 1955 until 1982, and for most of that time was leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party and indeed has had a profound impact on the life of this province and political discourse in this province.

My party had another leader representing York South. He has decided to pursue his fame and fortune in Rosedale most recently and we wish him well. More recently, the people of my riding—

Interjection.

Mr. Ferreira: Not so much. We'll see how he does. I understand that tomorrow, in fact, the New Democratic Party of Canada will be announcing a terrific, dynamic candidate to run in Toronto Centre–Rosedale, a progressive lawyer named El-Farouk Khaki, who I think is going to give Rosedale Bobby a real run for his money. But that's just my—

Mr. Kormos: I'm giving him a couple of hundred bucks.

Mr. Ferreira: I think I'll raise you \$200, Peter. I think you can do better than that, Peter.

More recently, we've been represented by members who happen to sit on the government side. York South–Weston was represented by the former Minister of Education and also capably by the former Minister of Economic Development, who was my immediate predecessor. I know, in fact, that I owe many of their supporters gratitude for supporting me and helping me achieve victory on February 8. Indeed, I had support from a number of voters who considered themselves of the blue persuasion, Progressive Conservatives, and I thank them as well.

So here I am in this House, wanting to be an effective voice for the constituents, for the residents of my riding, and their needs are great. The average household income in my riding—and it certainly has received a lot of column inches and much time on television and on radio—is \$45,000 a year. That's the second-lowest in the entire province. These are people, the residents, the constituents of York South–Weston, who look for their government to deliver the tools, the resources, the supports to help them get ahead. I do not believe, and I say this respectfully, that this particular government has delivered in the manner that it should have. We've heard of the budget and the measures in that budget. I think it is unfortunate that the measures that will help the most, the neediest are forced to wait four and five years to receive the full impact of those measures. This government should be held to account for that.

The motion that has been presented here today by my friends with the official opposition is an important one because it speaks to the deficiency of this government. This government promised us a lot, three and a half years ago. Unfortunately, they haven't delivered enough. We've seen, over the past week and a half, a very serious issue emerge that shakes the confidence of Ontarians, and this government has been unwilling to respond, to take responsibility, to be accountable, to be transparent. In my mind, that's unacceptable. That's why I stand here to say that I support the motion put forward by the leader of the official opposition. I believe it is a timely one and it's one that needs to be raised in this House. I sincerely hope that the members opposite listen carefully and listen clearly to this motion because it speaks to the deficiencies, the negligence, the lack of follow-through on their promises. Ultimately, the final word on this motion will be spoken in October, when the people of Ontario have a chance to cast their votes, and I think their decision will perhaps surprise a lot of the members on the government side of this House.

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I want to conclude by saying how absolutely privileged I am to be here, but in this day and age, the six-year-old who comes from Bangladesh, El Salvador or Ghana I don't believe is being given the same opportunities to succeed that I was given as a six-year-old arriving from the Azores, and that is not acceptable to me. I believe it's not acceptable to many members of this House. It certainly is not acceptable to my nine colleagues in the New Democratic Party caucus. That's why we have to continue to stand up for the interests of those who are marginalized, who are neglected and who are left behind. That's certainly what I plan to do during my time here, and I hope that will be a lengthy time.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I know you're anxious to hear from me, but before I start, I want to congratulate the member from York South-Weston on his maiden speech and the story that you told of your life. I want to thank you for that and congratulate you.

The member from Nepean-Carleton made a comment about Murray Elston. I too support that he was an outstanding member, as he represented the riding that I do—and that's all I support. We'll go with that, and now I shall begin.

It's certainly—I wouldn't want to say “a pleasure,” because it isn't, but in a way it is. It really is my pleasure to rise today to talk about the absolutely absurd accusations by the official opposition. One of the things that happened to me when I first took over government—I simply could not believe the mess that everything was in. For the opposite side to sit there, and the comments that they make, I find absolutely ludicrous.

When we took over government, in our constituent offices the state of the government in what we saw with birth certificates, family responsibilities, so many of the services, were simply in a crisis state. Then I hear members of the House stand up, specifically the member from Leeds-Grenville, with absolute pride in his voice when he talks about Mike Harris, what he did. I know you're very fond of sayings across the way. How about this one? “Cut first; worry about the consequences later.” Who does that remind you of?

I want to go back to the reference that the member from Leeds-Grenville made to Mike Harris with absolute pride. Those are other things that we could talk about because that was how that government ran: “Fly by the seat of your pants.” There's another little saying that one could go by.

Let's talk specifically about the health record, because I know that a lot of Ontarians are very concerned about the health record. The Tory health record: cut \$557 million from hospitals over two years; ordered 28 hospitals closed; closed 5,000 hospital beds; fired thousands of nurses. Oh, we're fond of our little sayings. Here's another one for you over across the way: “that nurses were as old-fashioned as hula hoops.” Do you remember that saying?

Who was that who said that with the pride in their voice from across the way? The member for Leeds-

Grenville, with pride in his voice, when he talked about Mike Harris. He said what he said, and he did say what he said. What did he say? That nurses were as old-fashioned as hula hoops. That's what he said.

Then we can go back to the third party, who absolutely failed to address medical school spaces. Where were we? What did you think was happening in the rural communities when doctor shortages were happening? What were you doing? A number of members across the way who are here today: You were in cabinet. What did you do? I can tell you, from across the way, here's another little saying that we're fond of around our area: You say as you do and you do as you say. That's a foreign concept from across the way.

Since we're going to talk about some other little comments here, let's talk about—

Interjections.

Mrs. Mitchell: Oh, come, come, come now. I didn't interrupt you when you were talking.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. We've been quite good with each other this afternoon until this point. I understand the spirit in the debate, but if you would give the member from Huron-Bruce your undivided attention.

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that members from this side of the House take a great deal of pride in is that we respect tradition and we would never consider having a budget not brought down in the House. But who did that? The Magna budget. Why would they have done the Magna budget? Let's talk about that. Now we have to go back to our little sayings again from across the way: A leopard doesn't change its spots. That was what the leader of the official opposition—this is another little saying: “A leopard never changes its spots.” I can only take from that that I can expect from the opposite side of the House that they would do it again if they had another chance. A leopard never changes its spots. Pride in the voice of the member from Leeds-Grenville when he talks about Mike Harris. So I can only think that the budget would move again.

Why was it moved? When we took over government, there was a \$5.5-billion deficit. That's good government. I just want to say, the budget was brought down, and one of my press members said—we were debating and his final comments were, “You know what? The McGuinty government did something neither the NDP nor the Tory government could do.” And what was that? We balanced the budget. You never could do that. In the best of economic times—

Interjection: You sold the 407.

Mrs. Mitchell: You sold the 407. Here's another saying: You sold us down the river. That's another saying.

When I think about that, how could that be? In the best of economic times, we couldn't balance the budget. So when we talk about transparency and accountability, who then was—

Interjection.

Mrs. Mitchell: Let's not forget the saying from the heckling across the way—a leopard never changes its

spots—as spoken by your leader. So we know that, given half a chance, you'd fire our meat inspectors; you'd fire our water inspectors; consultants back on the table; expenses up 21%—we've worked hard to bring those down but you'd bring those back up—advertising back on again.

Let's just think about this for a minute. I was watching the news. Who do you think was on there and what was his saying? It was a catchy little saying, because we're fond of catchy little sayings. I'm very fond of this one today: A leopard never changes its spots. And when we saw the Prime Minister, he was making an announcement on wait-time strategies and he had a clever little saying, but I can't remember what it was. I know there are other speakers who are anxious to come up and speak and I know they'll think of it.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Reducing the queue.

Mrs. Mitchell: Reducing the queue. Isn't that clever? No, taming the queue. There's another clever little saying from the opposite side over there, because we know how fond you are of them.

One of the things that I also wanted to talk about—

Interjection.

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Mrs. Mitchell: Yes. Well, I know there's pride over on the other side there.

One of the other little comments that—I just wanted to expand; I'm very fond of those sayings—we had from the other side was, what standard do we see from the opposite side? Let's think about what standard we see from this side going over there. I can't help but go back to what we saw as a government from the Mike Harris Tory government, because we know how supportive—the member from Leeds–Grenville spoke repeatedly of how supportive he was of Mike Harris.

I represent a rural community, and I know you're all anxious to hear about that. One of the things that I did want to talk about—and I only have a little bit of time left, so I'm just going to have to get onto that. I know you're going to be disappointed that I don't have more time. But one of the things that I do want to talk about is the increased investment in health care and education and also to the agricultural sector.

We understand that at times it has been a difficult period for the agricultural sector. We have committed over \$900 million over the last three years and we've also increased the baseline budget for OMAFRA. One of the things that has to be said, because I know that there were comments a number of times from across the way—they talk and they talk, and they talk about the agricultural budget. But where I'm from, they closed agricultural offices: gone. I tell you, they just came in, shut them down. And when we talk about consultation and what can happen, it really doesn't happen: They just come in and they shut down. A leopard doesn't change its spots, as spoken by the leader of the opposition, as Mike Harris, as supported by the member from Leeds–Grenville. We see all the connection.

But the agriculture budget at OMAFRA was not cut. This government increased the budget, and that hasn't happened, we haven't seen that, in the last 15 years. So that's what I have to say. I also want to mention, as a representative from the riding of Huron–Bruce, all of the good work that is happening when I see the budget and the difference that it has made in my riding.

I know that one of the things we have heard about, and this is just one specific thing that I wanted to take just a minute to talk about, was from the energy sector. We produce 25% of the energy from the riding of Huron–Bruce to the province of Ontario. The commitment for the transmission is our highway to prosperity, and that was recognized by the need from our riding in the budget. So once again, we recognize the work that needs to be done, and—well, I just have to say that I've run out of time, unfortunately. I do know that the members opposite are delighted we're engaged, and we're prepared to talk all night if that's what it's going to take.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate. But before I recognize the next debater, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is having a good time, but I would ask that he keep it a little lower.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in the debate. I'd like to refocus for those who perhaps have just joined the proceedings and remind the House that we're debating John Tory's opposition day motion, which reads in part as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Premier has failed to ensure the highest level of integrity and responsibility for his ministers, the most recent example being when lottery-playing Ontario citizens were ripped off and the minister responsible sat idly by and did nothing;

“That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government as a whole has breached the faith of the people of Ontario, has failed to protect their interests, failed to address the urgent issues facing them ... and failed to deliver meaningful results; and

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Premier should start upholding standards of integrity, responsibility, and accountability.”

I find it interesting that we've just had a performance from a member of the Liberal caucus, who I'm sure was very entertaining to some people who were watching these proceedings, but I wonder how many of her constituents were wondering, “Why this show? Why this performance, when we have in front of us in this House a very serious issue; we have a very serious resolution that speaks to the integrity of the government?” Rather than spend the time that she did performing a sideshow, she might, with some integrity, have responded to the resolution that's before the House.

The reality is that people across the province are looking for leadership; they're looking for integrity from their elected politicians. They're not getting it from this Premier.

This Lottogate scandal was an opportunity for the Premier of this province to show his leadership. The role of government should be that of trustee of fairness, of

equity and of justice. If we can't count on our government and the leadership of our government to deliver that, then there is true failure. We're suggesting that as the people of this province observe what is happening here, in these circumstances, they are seeing a void of leadership and a deficit of integrity.

All we have to do is look at the most recent demonstration by the Premier of how he is treating this very serious issue, where hundreds of Ontarians were defrauded of millions of dollars through the inefficiencies of a crown corporation and through a minister who, on his watch, allowed this defrauding to take place and now does not himself have the integrity to step aside while the investigation takes place, and the Premier of this province does not have the integrity to ask him to step aside.

I want, just for the record, to point out to the people of this province that not only is the Premier not taking that responsibility, but as recently as yesterday, he shifted the blame for what took place to hard-working Ontarians and, in his own words, blamed convenience store owners and operators in this province for the mismanagement of his own government.

I issued a press release today, the heading of which is, "Dalton McGuinty's Insulting Comments Not Worthy of a Premier." I refer to the fact that the Premier of Ontario has insulted and denigrated the reputation and the character of thousands of people in this province by painting them all with the same brush, and he has said they are not worthy of being trusted; they are untrustworthy. That is the message from the Premier of this province.

I've called on the Premier to issue a formal apology to every single individual who owns or operates or works at a convenience store in this province. These are hard-working people. Many of these people are immigrants who have come to this country, to this province, and have invested their hard-earned money and are working day in and day out. For the Premier of this province to publicly make the statement that they not worthy of trust is unconscionable. If the Premier has any integrity at all, he will issue a formal apology, and we look forward to seeing that. I doubt very much, however, given the performance and the track record of Dalton McGuinty, that we'll see that.

Mr. Kormos: I'm grateful to my colleague from York South-Weston for leaving me 15 minutes in which to speak in support of this resolution.

Look, the problem is that the government has been running a crooked game. That's what the Ombudsman discovered: people ripped off, to the tune of millions of dollars.

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Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Are you objecting to that?

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Yes, I am. I don't think it's appropriate to say that.

Mr. Klees: It was wrong for the government to do that.

Mr. Patten: The government didn't do it, and you know damned well.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. First of all, if you would withdraw that statement.

Mr. Patten: I withdraw that statement.

The Acting Speaker: I would caution the member to be careful with his language.

Mr. Kormos: Let me put it this way: Back when I was a kid living down in the south end of Crowland on King south, Nick Penkov with his craps game upstairs at Bill's pool hall on Saturday night—and as a kid I watched it many a time. All the Niagara Falls guys came in, and they had names like Joe Mountain and names like that. There were thousands of dollars that passed that table at that craps game upstairs at Bill's pool hall. Let me tell you: not a single better ever didn't get paid off when they won. Nick Penkov ran a straight game; everybody knew it. That's why guys were prepared to bet Nick's craps game upstairs at Bill's pool hall. The pool hall's gone now; Nick's gone too. I was a pallbearer at his funeral.

The poker game downstairs at Blackbeard's pool hall: They'd go on from Saturday night, 11 o'clock, down through to Sunday morning, 7, 8, 9 a.m., and let me tell you, at the poker games at Blackbeard's pool hall, thousands of dollars were bet on a given night, but nobody never got paid off on a bet they won.

Louie Gale ran his book out of the pool hall itself. Louie Gale ran book for all the time I knew him. That was a good 25 years, and he'd been running book before that. Louie's dead now too. But let me tell you, Louie always paid up. Nobody who bet with Louie Gale ever got ripped off.

That's not the case with people who bet with the government's OLG. What the Ombudsman is telling us—and it's irrefutable, undeniable, not capable of being debated—is that hard-working Ontarians showing up on a Saturday evening at their convenience store with their loonie or their toonie in hand, knowing that the odds of winning aren't very good—that makes it all the more important that you don't skewer those odds, doesn't it? Those people with their loonie and their toonie, playing the 6/49, the Super 7, the Ontario 49 or whatever else there might be out there would have been better off placing bets on the Fort Erie track with Louie Gale. Those people, those hard-working Ontarians who go to that lottery terminal in the corner store on a Saturday night would have been better off shooting craps up at Penkov's game upstairs.

Those hard-working Ontarians who figured, "If you can't trust a government game, who can you trust?" as things turned out, would have been better off going down to Blackbeard's pool hall and playing some seven card stud, or maybe placing their bets with—remember Ace Ellis over at the Dexter Hotel? Ace used to keep his betting slips, but he kept them on flash paper. Do you know what flash paper is? Flash paper is, when you ignite it, it just goes "poof"; it disappears. There are barely ashes left. But Ace Ellis used to keep his betting slips under his wig. You're too young, Mr. Hudak. Ace was making book in the Dexter, again, for as long as I

can remember, and I was probably 14 or 15 years old the first time I was in there watching Ace taking bets at the Dexter Hotel. Ontarians would have been far safer, far better off placing bets with Ace Ellis, with the flash paper betting slips hidden under his wig than they would with the government of Ontario.

We're lucky. Down in Niagara, where Mr. Hudak and I come from, if we want to bet a safe two-dollar lottery, we can just cross the bridge and do the New York state. That's what Ontarians are doing down there. See, people have lost trust, they've lost confidence in Dalton McGuinty's lottery gaming enterprise—big Dalton. Dalton has thrown thousands of Ontarians—maybe more—to the fishes. Dalton and the Liberal government have all but cement-booted thousands of honest Ontarians who simply wanted the odds to be as they were stated.

We're not talking about one incident of an irregularity. We're not talking about one incident of a mix-up. What did the Ombudsman say? Hundreds of millions of dollars being ripped off from hard-working Ontarians. Not only that, but we're also told that hospitals and charities were being cheated—cheated, Speaker. They weren't being cheated by you. They weren't being cheated by the Conservative Party. They weren't being cheated by the New Democrat Party. They were being cheated by the Liberals of Ontario and the Dalton McGuinty government. At the end of the day—you know, the cabinet minister with the high-priced, expensive suit and the Gucci shoes and the big fat pinky rings and the car and driver—the Lincoln Town Car, the long-wheelbase town car—being driven from Bistro 990 to Truffles perhaps up at the corner of Bloor and Avenue Road, maybe a stop by Sassafras on Yorkville Avenue—I'm sorry, the fire put them out of business for a while; the cabinet minister has been doing without the \$18 martinis—meeting with the Duncan Browns and the high-priced CEOs and chairs of boards of directors of places like OLG.

What were they talking about? That's the job of the minister. Do you understand what I'm saying? It's the job of the minister to meet with these people, because at the end of the day it's called ministerial accountability. Where I come from it means that the buck stops there. That's what Ontarians understand. The minister doesn't seem to understand it. The Premier of Ontario, Mr. McGuinty, doesn't seem to understand it.

You see, there's a problem here, and that's because there's no doubt that there's a crooked game being run and that people were being ripped off, to the tune of millions of dollars. There's no doubt about that. That is beyond debate. The issue is, did the minister know about it? And if he did, what did he do about it? Or in the alternative, was the minister not aware of it? And then that begs the question, why not?

Here's the minister, who just makes himself another \$30,000 a year with his salary increase, playing—what is it?—hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil. Come on. The minister wants to say that he was like the piano player in the brothel who didn't know what was going on upstairs. But what we do know as well, and this is

irrefutable, beyond debate, not questionable, is that—who's the gaggle of Liberal fixers, Liberal hit men? What's the Liberal SWAT team that gets called in when all hell breaks loose because CBC has got a hold of the Bob Edmonds story? One Jim Warren: Jim Warren and Mr. McGuinty—tight; we're talking about two guys who are tight. Warren Kinsella: Dalton McGuinty and Warren Kinsella—tight; we're talking tight. And then you've got the other hangers-on; you've got the Lopinskis, perhaps. Who are some of the other big Liberal fat-cat players involved in that? Don Guy—

1700

Mr. Yakabuski: Don Guy, Warren Kinsella, Jim Warren.

Mr. Kormos: —Yakabuski says.

Interjections.

Mr. Kormos: Well, I'm sorry. Dalton McGuinty doesn't belch without asking Warren Kinsella for his advice about it first. How true it is. These are people who were tight, and what were they brought in to do? They were brought in to fix the problem, to silence the sources. They were there to whack the story.

And how do they do that? How do they spin it? How does this Liberal gang of four, this Liberal hit team, respond? He's an 80-year-old man, God bless him, Mr. Edmonds, now dead. He'll never see the money. What do they do? Instead of saying, "Hey, let's deal with this issue," they say, "Let's spin this. We will lie; we will lie; we will lie." They did lie. They lied; they lied; they lied—Liberal Kinsella, Liberal Warren, Liberal Guy. Was Liberal Lopinski there as well? Was he part of the lie? "We will lie to the people of Ontario." They concoct a spin that's a lie, and the lie is one of those lies where it's lie big or go home. And it's quite frankly something where they probably should pay their retainer back, because it isn't the smartest lie in the world. It was a rather stupid lie, one that was rather readily exposed. They said, "Oh, well, the reason why retailers are making more money than the general public and winning more of it is because they gamble more."

Well, that's the quintessential illustration of the fallacy around odds. You know the question, don't you, Speaker? Flip a coin 20 times; it turns up heads every time. What are the odds on the 21st flip? The very same as they were on the first flip. The very same as they were on the first flip, right?

Mr. Yakabuski: I've heard that one before.

Mr. Kormos: Yakabuski knows that. The odds are the very same on the 21st time as they are on the first. That in and of itself reveals that the spin around, "Oh, they win more because they play more" is—look, the people of Ontario may want to shoot craps, but they don't want to hear crap from their government, and that's what they got from Warren Kinsella, Don Guy and Jim Warren.

The other question that is begged is this. Duncan Brown is gone. Folks sat down with Duncan Brown and they cut him a sweetheart deal. They said, "Duncan, you fall on your sword. You're going to try to take attention away from some of the other players." Clearly, Wilson

Lee, executive assistant, former communications adviser to Mr. Caplan, says that Wilson Lee was advised by Ontario Lottery and Gaming that there was no problem and that the security systems were as secure as anybody could want. Clearly, people lied to Wilson Lee. And if people at OLG lied to Wilson Lee, if they did—as compared to other people lying about what they were told—how come Duncan Brown is the only one to go?

Was Duncan Brown alone? Was he, as has been suggested, some sort of rogue employee of OLG? Not bloody likely, Speaker. Just figure out the odds for yourself. The odds are that you have a government that knew full well that the OLG was running a crooked game. The odds are you've got a minister who knew what was going on, but instead of reacting and protecting the people of Ontario, he sent in the Liberal hit team to try to silence the source and spin it with lies. That's what the odds are, and I'd bet on that one any day; I'd bet the farm. So would the people of Ontario.

Mr. Leal: I appreciate having the opportunity to provide a few comments on this resolution. First of all, I want to say, as a person who's interested in history, that I enjoyed the big speech from the member for York South-Weston. I know that if he had the opportunity, he would have pointed out one other great fact about the Weston Golf and Country Club: In 1955, Arnold Palmer won the Canadian Open at the Weston Golf and Country Club, and it was Mr. Palmer's first victory on the PGA Tour. He was there some years ago to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his victory. So the Weston Golf and Country Club has a great history, and I wanted to get that on the record.

I do want to spend some time talking about this resolution. It's interesting that we talk about integrity, we talk about veracity and we talk about honesty: Those are characteristics that all of us need in this place.

I want to read a letter that was sent to Mr. Tory from D. Paul Ayotte, who was chairman of the Peterborough area flood relief committee in November 2004. Mr. Ayotte now has the distinction of being mayor of the city of Peterborough.

"Dear Mr. Tory:

"As chairman of the Peterborough area flood relief committee, which is administering the ODRAP on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I was somewhat taken aback by the comments attributed to you in a recent article in the Peterborough Examiner. The remarks were apparently made at a function at the Kawartha Golf and Country Club here in Peterborough. From your comments you are obviously not aware of the situation here and were either misinformed by your people or someone set you up.

"From my perspective the provincial government has been very supportive of our efforts to provide timely relief to those community members affected by the flood, both in visiting our community to provide moral support, and providing the funds that allowed our committee to advance approximately \$2.1 million to local residential, small business, farm and not-for-profit claimants almost immediately. Your suggestion that the government has

been slow to deliver flood funding is not accurate at all. I don't recall this advance funding having been provided in previous situations in Ontario where disasters had occurred and certainly not here in Peterborough in 2002.

"Ministry staff have been very supportive of our committee and have responded quickly to our needs and requests. Most recently our committee requested a review of the provincial policy that depreciated furnaces up to a maximum of 50%. We passed a motion requesting that depreciation be limited to up to 25% of the value. The ministry went well beyond that and agreed to fund replacement furnaces up to a maximum of \$3,000 and we had our answer in about four days. So I don't know where you are coming from.

"While funding the extreme financial hardship cases 100% they also supported our creating an urgent needs category that allowed us to flow approximately \$0.5 million to 279 families on a timely basis. This money will eventually come out of the funds raised by our committee and matched two to one by the province but was funded upfront by the province now. As a person who spent over 23 years in local government I can honestly say this has been the most positive experience I have had dealing with a provincial ministry.

"We expect private sector claims under ODRAP to be in the neighbourhood of \$10 million but until we have those 3,802 claims adjusted and we know the results of our fundraising efforts, we don't even know how much we will need from the province. Why would you expect them to flow the money to us now? I can't speak for the municipality, which probably won't know how much damage it has suffered to its infrastructure until the frost comes out of the ground next spring, but I suspect they are in no position to spend millions of dollars until their constituents finish their assessment of the community needs and they meld those with their other works.

"There has also been a great deal of confusion about the \$12.2-million-dollar threshold and what the federal government funding actually means to the citizens of Peterborough. Your remarks have perpetuated that. I hope in future your comments will be more founded in fact."

That's from D. Paul Ayotte, who was chairman of our flood relief committee and who is now the mayor of the city of Peterborough. He was clear: Integrity goes both ways when you're talking about a situation.

1710

Let's talk about ministerial responsibility for a moment. I had the opportunity to watch the panel that was on TVO the other evening. That panel was made up of David Cooke, a very distinguished former member of this place; Sheila Copps, a formal federal member; Hershell Ezrin, who was chief principal secretary to Premier David Peterson; the member from Simcoe-Grey; and by satellite they had David Christopherson, a distinguished former member of this place who is now a federal member of Parliament in Ottawa.

It was very interesting what they talked about in terms of ministerial responsibility. They did say that when

you're dealing with an arms-length relationship, which is what the OLG is, there's always a grey area in terms of the minister being responsible for the day-to-day operations of those arms-length relationships.

I go back to the ultimate principle of ministerial accountability. It's the Bevin principle from Great Britain. Mr. Bevin of course was the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the mid-1950s. As he was preparing to present his budget to Westminster, he was out for a walk with his dog and he, very casually, ran into someone and suggested, "You'd better buy your pipe tobacco this evening because it's going to be increased tomorrow as a result of my budget."

Clearly, in that particular case there was a budget confidence that was broken. There was ministerial responsibility in that he provided information in his budget before it was delivered at Westminster, and that's always become the principle of ministerial responsibility, along with the issue of personal corruption that has been perpetrated by a minister.

Mr. Speaker, when you take the time and I know you have, to look at the Ombudsman's report, this issue of insider trading has been going on since 1993. The Ombudsman clearly identified that. When I hear members opposite—five of them of course were members of the executive council during that period from 1990 to 1995—it appears to me that they took no action, as this situation of insider trading did commence in 1993. The Ombudsman was very clear in identifying that in his report.

We go forward to 2001, when the current member from Erie-Lincoln had responsibility for OLG when the Edmonds case first appeared. He has indicated in a very public fashion that he wasn't aware of the circumstances around Mr. Edmonds's case in 2001. Indeed, as we've come across that, the Ombudsman was asked to do a report. He's made several recommendations, along with KPMG, who have also looked at this situation, to bring integrity back to the lottery gaming situation in the province of Ontario.

I personally don't buy tickets, but I certainly know the men and women in my community of Peterborough who operate convenience stores. I certainly have the utmost confidence in how they run their operations day in and day out in order to provide tickets to the public who want to purchase them, and I know they operate their businesses with the utmost integrity.

I just also want to get a couple of quotes on the record that the Leader of the Opposition made. They were made on November 23, 2006. "Ontario should consider banning lottery retailers from buying tickets in light of mounting accusations that clerks are winning a disproportionate number of prizes."

"Is it more important to let those 140,000 people buy their tickets and have some of the revenue from that than it is to maintain the integrity of the system? I think integrity always comes first."

So it's interesting. Today we've seen a bit of a change in position where the Premier, speaking in his second

language, which is en français, I don't believe he was condemning the men and women who operate these facilities across the province of Ontario and are distributing these lottery tickets.

We've gone to great lengths over the last number of years to provide an increasing amount of accountability to the people of Ontario. We've allowed the Auditor General of Ontario to have new powers to look at OPG, to look at Hydro One, to look at universities and colleges and to look at children's aid societies. We've taken the time to lift that veil of secrecy that had been around for a number of years to allow the Auditor General to shine the light on those organizations, which I think is very important. Indeed, after the Auditor General got those powers, he pointed out some shortcomings in those organizations, and we've taken quick action to make sure that the situations that were identified were corrected.

It's interesting—I'll have an opportunity to maybe comment about the budget. We've provided \$2.1 billion to the Ontario child benefit, when it has fully kicked in in the year 2011, which will be \$1,100 per child to low-income families, whether they're a part of the area in Ontario where people have financial challenges or they're on benefits. I think it will be extremely helpful to those citizens.

I think we've also made some dramatic improvements in the area of assessments, going to a four-year assessment period. Increases will be phased in over that period of time.

I could go on and on, but my time is up.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise and debate the motion standing in the name of the leader of the official opposition.

Certainly, the allegations that have been brought forward in question period and the tone and tenor of the resolution submitted in the name of the opposition leader show very serious issues in debate this evening and during question period. These are not accusations against the conduct of the minister and his office or the Premier and his office that are taken lightly. They're hardly random or scurrilous suggestions. They reflect a pattern of behaviour that became evident in the ministry, in the Premier's office and in their political wing.

I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that in the spring of 2005, some 50-plus media articles were published on the inside win case involving the theft of Mr. Edmonds's ticket. That story was also carried by some dozen-plus television and radio broadcasts. Any time that a minister's office or the Premier's office did a review of the media, that would have stuck out like the proverbial sore thumb. I would fully expect that if this kind of media had been around an issue, the first action of those who worked in the ministry and in the Premier's office would be to investigate what had transpired, why these allegations had taken place and why Mr. Edmonds had been treated in the fashion he had. I suspect that in the spring—I guess it was March 2005—there was knowledge within government and within the minister's office, if not the Premier's office, that there was a significant problem at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.

In January 2006, Jim Warren, who was Dalton McGuinty's communications director for 18 months, was hired in the newly created position of vice-president of strategic relationships at the OLG. I would fully expect, because of the relationship between Mr. Warren and the Premier—a friendship and a professional relationship that had lasted some time—that there would be, because of Mr. Warren's position, some political connection between the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. and the Premier's office, if not the minister's office, in an additional sense more so than the regular reporting relationship between an agency and the ministry.

On April 11, 2006, some six months before the airing of the infamous Fifth Estate—infamous for the government, at the very least—an e-mail was sent to two senior officials and communications director Wilson Lee in Minister Caplan's ministry by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. asking what information should be released to the CBC for their story on inside winners. I think any of us know that it would be a rare occurrence indeed for senior officials and a communications adviser to be contacted on an issue like this without a significant number of alarm bells going off. Tie that to some time recently, in the spring of 2005, when you had 50 media articles about these types of issues, and one would think there was knowledge internally within government of a serious problem afoot.

1720

Once the Fifth Estate program was aired, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.'s first instinct was to fight the report. They commissioned a poll of 380 people to gauge the impact of the media story on their reputation. Then they polled another 344 people. The cost of these polls was reported at \$21,000. Mind you, there was a fight, a great deal of resistance from the government in releasing that data through a freedom of information request, and we had to appeal all the way to the Information and Privacy Commissioner to get those facts forward.

On October 29, 2006, McGuinty political adviser Warren Kinsella, Jim Warren, who I just mentioned, as well as Don Guy, who is the Liberal campaign manager and former chief of staff, if I recall the position correctly, gathered together to plot how to fight against the Fifth Estate story. The instincts were to cover it up rather than pursue investigations of problems within the OLG, to fight back against the whistle-blower and to fight back against the Fifth Estate report. This is no harmless threesome. This is not Jack, Chrissie and Janet from the Three's Company hall of fame, to talk about a classic 1970s TV show. This is the starting line of spin doctors employed on the Liberal team, and it's no coincidence, as my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said today, that they happened to show up at the same place—no doubt an all-out government effort to fight back against the story.

When there is an investigation of this nature reaching senior officials, an ongoing police investigation of fraud and corruption, an investigation potentially of police obstruction of justice with respect to the OPP now

bringing the Toronto Police Service report, that is why you see these types of questions in the Legislature today and the high level of volume created in the media.

The right thing for a minister to do at this point in time is to step aside and allow the investigation to proceed, and then, if found to have done nothing wrong, be restored to his position. We certainly saw it when Jim Wilson, as health minister, had the courage to do that, and Bob Runciman as the correctional services minister when the name of a young offender was inadvertently released to the public. We saw Evelyn Gigantes of the former Bob Rae government do this, and Elinor Caplan, a former Liberal minister under David Peterson, did that and followed that process. I think—not Gigantes—the rest were all restored to their cabinet positions.

I have a good relationship with the honourable member. As his critic for public infrastructure—not the agencies—I have a great deal of respect for what he's done in his previous work as a member of provincial Parliament. I hope he will do the honourable thing, because I'm confident, knowing Mr. Caplan, that he'll have the opportunity to be restored to his position. But to save his own reputation and that of the government and satisfy the citizens of Ontario, he should do the right thing and resign.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this resolution today. I believe there is just an air of irony in the chamber today as we hear from the member for Erie-Lincoln speaking so piously on this issue when in fact I believe it was under his watch that much of this all began and legal proceedings were undertaken by the previous government. It just seems ironic to me.

I look at the resolution in the second paragraph and I think if we changed only a couple of words, it would ring so much truer in my riding of Nipissing: "That, in the opinion of this House, the Harris government as a whole breached the faith of the people of Nipissing, failed to protect their interests, failed to address the urgent issues facing them and their pocketbooks and failed to deliver meaningful results."

The people of Nipissing suffered through many years of Conservative representation and, really, there's no legacy there from the previous regime. What we've had to do over the last three and a half years is clean up the mess that was left behind, and we have been doing yeoman service at the task of cleaning up the mess that was left by the previous government.

You simply have to look at the issues that are of greatest concern to my constituents, the people of Nipissing. If you look at education, we see schools right now that are being rebuilt, that are seeing renovations that were long overdue, that are seeing investments in infrastructure that the previous government just let slip and fall. It didn't matter that the schools were falling apart around our students. It didn't matter because they didn't care. They didn't care about the teachers or about our education system, and clearly they didn't care about the kids. We are rebuilding those schools. We are

rebuilding the confidence in our public education system, whereas one of the few commitments that the opposition has made going into the next election is that they will fund private schools, which I find incredibly interesting. I'd like to know why they don't want to support our public education system.

I think we only need to look at the investments—or lack of investments—that they made in the public education system to really understand where their commitment was and where their integrity lies. We can look at the reduction in classroom sizes in our primary schools across the province. I've spoken to teachers who once were teaching 32 kids in their classes and now have 18 or 21. They're delighted that they're able to give that one-on-one education to the students who really need it. We're seeing those students' test scores improve; we're seeing those students thrive.

Another area that's very near and dear to the people in my riding is health care. Whereas the previous government, under the Harris-Eves regime, ordered the closure of 28 hospitals, we're actually seeing the rebuilding of hospitals across this province. We're seeing two in my riding that are long overdue. We're seeing hospitals that were left to fall apart, again, around the dedicated staff that we have in our hospitals across—

Laughter.

Ms. Smith: I'm sorry that the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke finds it funny that we have dedicated staff in our hospitals, but I certainly do in my riding and I know across the province—nurses and front-line workers who are working so hard to provide the health care that Ontarians need and deserve. We are seeing them being housed in facilities that are not up to par. But in my riding, we're seeing the construction of new hospitals, as well as in the riding of the member from Peterborough. We're seeing that across the province—investments in infrastructure that is much-needed and that has been left in disarray.

When we talk about integrity and about cleaning up the messes that were left behind, I think it's also ironic that we were the ones who introduced more sunshine legislation to allow the sun to shine in. We are allowing more public scrutiny of our lists of those who are earning larger salaries, allowing us to see, in fact, perhaps what the spouse of the member from Erie-Lincoln was making when she was over at Hydro. These are things that we didn't know prior to our government taking power, and we are now able to see these things and to really address some of the concerns that were raised by many of my constituents, who were very concerned when the Harris-Eves regime was providing us with almost daily partisan literature in the mail that was paid for with taxpayers' dollars. We've cleaned that up.

We've seen just a plethora of activity on this side of the House, cleaning up the government, cleaning up the messes that were left behind, cleaning up the deficit that was left behind. Let's not forget the deficit: \$5.6 billion left behind by the previous government that they didn't own up to, that they didn't acknowledge. They actually

had to hide their budget by presenting it somewhere other than this House.

We have undertaken to clean up the messes that were left behind. We are returning integrity to this Legislature, to the public services that the people of Ontario—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member from Erie-Lincoln, order, please.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I'm getting pretty close to throwing somebody out, all right? Order, please.

Member from Nipissing.

Ms. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your intervention. I am only too pleased to continue to speak to this resolution.

Under our government, we have cleaned up the messes left behind, and we are investing taxpayers' dollars wisely. Only recently, under our new budget, we introduced the \$2.1-billion Ontario child benefit that will deliver up to \$1,100 per child to our lowest-income families.

I had the opportunity last evening to visit Lana Mitchell at Low Income People Involvement in North Bay, one of our front-line service providers, who's absolutely delighted with some of the changes we've made, some of the new initiatives we've presented that are going to assist the most needy in my community.

We're continuing to raise the minimum wage, and we will have a minimum wage at \$10.25 an hour over the next three years. This is something that Lana thinks is very important for our community.

Our investments in low-income housing—housing that has been left behind, again, over the last 10 or 15 years. We're making investments in those areas. We are addressing the concerns that many of my constituents have, and certainly that those living in difficult circumstances have. We are improving their quality of life.

1730

In the resolution we're debating today, the leader of the official opposition has indicated that "the Premier should start upholding standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability." I would argue that the Premier certainly has upheld standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability. I'm very proud of our record. I'm very proud of what we as a government have done. I'm very proud of the progress we've made in cleaning up the mess that's been left behind by the previous regime and investing in the quality services that Ontarians across the province require and need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this resolution today.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): This debate is about the standards of integrity of this House, and I guess those standards go back to the way people have acted in this House over their term of office here.

If we go back to November 1999, now-Premier Dalton McGuinty accused then-Minister Tony Clement of corruption regarding a development in the Oak Ridges moraine. It was January 2000 when Minister Clement

filed a lawsuit for libel for \$1.7 million against now-Premier McGuinty, and it was on April 5, 2001, that the now-Premier apologized to Mr. Clement. I quote directly from the letter: "I wish to apologize to you without reservation for the use of the words 'corrupt' and 'corruption' in two media interviews in November 1999, expressing my views on your action." His letter of apology also says that he "clearly ... crossed the line."

Further, in January 2006, the Integrity Commissioner found Minister Takhar, the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, in breach of the integrity act for egregious and reckless conduct. Minister Takhar is the only minister in Ontario's history to be found in breach of the integrity act and to remain in office as a cabinet minister.

There is also the Joe Cordiano affair. He failed to resign over exactly the same things that Chris Stockwell was forced to resign over.

And today we have this situation centring around Minister Caplan, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. This isn't about Minister Caplan, as was pointed out earlier; this is about the integrity of this government. This is the party of Mitch Hepburn, Bob Nixon and David Peterson. But this party, under Dalton McGuinty, has lost its moral compass. In fact, for a Premier who has had to apologize for libellous comments, perhaps they never had a moral compass to begin with. It's a sad day for Ontario.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased to follow the member for York South-Weston, whom I want to congratulate—a great maiden speech, by the way—and to enter the debate here.

Martin Luther King Jr. was once asked for his take on politics, and he said that politics is about the kinds of decisions we make about the distribution of goods and services and opportunities. I heard Mr. Tory, the Leader of the Opposition, speak on March 26 in his response to the budget. He said he wanted to start positively, and to his credit, he did. He said, "When you want to take a look at what a government cares about, what a government doesn't care about, whether the government is actually delivering for people, the best place to look is ... the budget." I agree. That kind of resonates with what Martin Luther King Jr. said. I heard the words and I was optimistic. I was waiting in breathless anticipation to hear his "I have a dream" speech, for him to climb up to the mountaintop, peek over into the promised land and describe his vision of Ontario. But alas, I was once again disappointed. Instead of a visionary blueprint for Ontario, what we got was the same old political rhetoric and, today, more of the same.

I want to leave the whole issue of the lottery situation to people who are better capable of dealing with that than I am: the Ombudsman and the OPP. I want to talk specifically to the second part of the Leader of the Opposition's motion—about all the things he alleges the government has failed to do. He suggested that we "failed to protect Ontario's interests." I have to wonder just what interests they might be. The environment? Children who

dream wonderful dreams and the teachers who used to have to work against incredible odds to make those dreams come true? He suggested that we "failed to address urgent issues." Like what? Like waiting times for surgeries? Like helping those locked in the grip of poverty to break out of that vicious cycle? Like ensuring that our water is clean and safe to drink? Is that what he meant?

He suggested that we "failed to deliver meaningful results." Give me a break. Anyone who has been around for even a few years understands that our progress as a nation can be no quicker than our progress in education. And in education we're making great progress: Class sizes are down; test scores are up; high-school graduation rates are up. Those are real, meaningful results. In health care, we're tracking for 8,000 more nurses; 23% more doctors each year graduating; and over 500,000 Ontarians today who didn't have a family doctor in 2003 now have one.

On the environment, we've protected 1.8 million acres of precious farmland and heritage environmental lands—larger than the size of Prince Edward Island, as we've heard before. On the economy, we've got 327,000 new jobs, and we're the number one producer of automobiles and auto parts in all of North America. We're moving to produce smarter cars, greener cars, lighter cars. The business education tax reductions are being well received by chambers of commerce and small business all across the province.

On the municipal-provincial relationship front: We moved, finally, to fix the municipal property assessment mess—and it's a mess. We've doubled the amount of operating funds available to municipalities in three short years. We're moving forward.

On fiscal transparency: It's appropriate to note some of the progress we've made there. We now have the second-lowest per capita administrative costs of all of the provinces in the country and the lowest debt-to-GNP ratio in this province for the last 13 years. That's real progress.

No one who has watched Al Gore's award-winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*—even the global-warming skeptics—could help but be moved by the message that we must move, and quickly, if we're going to reverse our ways and rescue our small, fragile planet. There are many truths we must face up to—some convenient and some inconvenient. Here are a few inconvenient truths that Mr. Tory and his colleagues are going to need to own up to.

It's an inconvenient truth that, in the face of Walkerton and the O'Connor report, the current government has moved forward and is continuing to move forward to protect our most precious resource—the water that sustains us—and that the party opposite voted against the Clean Water Act. It's a sad and inconvenient truth that the previous government set out to cause chaos throughout our education system. They denigrated teachers, they lowered morale and they caused a large number of wonderful educators to prematurely exit the system, to retire early. I can recall the 26 million lost school days.

Today, we contrast that to schools lining up to engage in the healthy schools program.

1740

It's an inconvenient truth that the previous government fostered a culture that created two classes of people: the lucky and the left out. Their 22.3% cut to social assistance spoke volumes, as did their lack of support for any social housing. Social housing was gone.

Compare that to what the current government has done around the Ontario child benefit, the renewal of social housing projects, the commitment to move on the minimum wage. Those things, when taken together, are going to do more to lift people in my community out of poverty than anything the previous government has done.

I want to quote from an editorial that recently appeared in the Dundas Star. It's called "Passing the Moral Test.

"Former US Vice-President Hubert Humphrey said, 'The moral test of a government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.'

"In our community and across the province, the care and compassion afforded those facing end-of-life illness is surpassing the 'moral test' with both grassroots and government support for residential hospice palliative care.

"In last week's provincial budget, the Ontario government leaped to the front of the line in this country with this endorsement of the more than 180 community-based volunteer organizations providing high-quality, compassionate end-of-life care for those living with a life-threatening illness, and those who care for them."

I want to mention another inconvenient truth, and that has to do with health care. The previous government had a great way to end waiting lists: They just closed hospitals. So I say to the members opposite, particularly the leader, you're right, budgets are moral statements that inform people about what a government cares about. Indeed, that's true. So, in the upcoming campaign in October, we'll go out and remind the people of Ontario of the progress we've made. We'll focus on how our schools are better places to learn, how our universities and colleges are expanding, how our health care system is both healthy and more responsive. We'll point out that our economy is growing, with a net 327,000 new jobs since 2003, and that our precious, green, environmentally sensitive heritage lands are being protected.

On the fiscal front, we'll highlight that the current budget eliminates Ontario's inherited \$5.5-billion deficit and that the government is projecting five consecutive balanced budgets, that we're keeping administrative costs down—the second-lowest in the country—and that our net debt-to-GNP ratio is the lowest in 13 years.

There may well be reasons to consider voting against the current government in the next election, but let's be fair: Those reasons don't include a failure to protect Ontario's interests or a failure to address urgent issues or

that this government has failed to deliver meaningful results.

I think that the people of Ontario—when they get a chance to compare the record of our government to the government opposite, we have no fear of trusting their judgment, because the people have built-in crap detectors. They'll have the wisdom to make the kind of choice that will move Ontario forward and to ensure that we can be all that we were intended to be.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Kormos: Can he say "crap"?

The Acting Speaker: Member from Niagara Centre: Are you saying someone said something unparliamentary?

Mr. Kormos: He said "crap."

The Acting Speaker: I did not hear anyone say it. Who said something unparliamentary?

Mr. Kormos: I'm not sure.

The Acting Speaker: All right.

Further debate?

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm pleased to join the debate on the opposition day motion today.

My leader talked today about Dalton McGuinty ducking the issues. I remember when Dalton McGuinty became Premier here, and in his throne speech he talked about—and I'm paraphrasing—raising the standard of integrity of this place to unknown heights, places that we've never seen before. What did we get from Dalton McGuinty's new standards of integrity?

Well, we got the Takhar scandal. This was about the first and only person in the history of this province to be cited by the Integrity Commissioner as being in breach of the Members' Integrity Act—the only minister ever. What was this about? This is about a minister who said, among many other things, that he had to meet his wife at the place of business where he was forbidden from going to discuss their daughter's education. I didn't know if they had sold their home or if they didn't live there any more or whatever, but they had to meet at his office—so I wasn't sure if there was another place—and this Premier, who had every opportunity to show leadership then, chose to bury his head in the sand and say, "Oh, not on my watch, because we just can't afford the scandal of a Liberal cabinet minister being thrown out of cabinet in disgrace."

They weathered that storm. Now we're here in 2007, an election year, and we've got a bigger scandal yet where the minister has made a complete mess of this and is so confused in his answers that not a single person in the province of Ontario believes him in anything he says. And this government's talking about trust and integrity?

The Premier has an opportunity. There's only one way to restore the integrity in this system, to allow people to begin to trust the system where they throws down their toonie or their loonie and they takes their chances. For the healing process to begin, the Premier must—must—demand the resignation of the minister responsible for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. That is the genesis, that is the beginning, for this healing to take place.

As I said, the Premier talked about new standards. You must know that it is not my standards of integrity that you will be judged by; it is your own standards of integrity that you will be judged by. The Premier said he raised the bar to new heights. That was just wonderful rhetoric. In fact, what we have seen with the issue of integrity with this Liberal cabinet and this Liberal government is that they have lowered the bar to depths we've never seen in this province because they refuse to resign when it is the only honourable thing to do.

The Acting Speaker: The time now being 5:50 of the clock, the time for debate is now concluded.

Mr. Tory has moved opposition day motion number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Elliott, Christine

Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm

Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.

Ferreira, Paul
Horwath, Andrea
Hudak, Tim

Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Tory, John
Yakabuski, John

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David

Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Van Bommel, Maria
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 20; the nays are 41.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The time now being after 6 of the clock, this House stands recessed until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1801.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L) Speaker / Président	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldeep (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Burlington	Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Don Valley East	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Don Valley-West	Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Wellington-Grey	O'Toole, John (PC)	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Durham	Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L) Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration	London-Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Markham	Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Erie-Lincoln Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke Centre Etobicoke-Centre	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (IND)
Etobicoke North Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga West Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke Lakeshore	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Nepean-Carleton	MacLeod, Lisa (PC)
Glengarry Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	North / Thunder Bay–Superior– Nord	
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation		Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Toronto–Danforth	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Parkdale–High Park	DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Zimmer, David (L)
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)		Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)		Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
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Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L) Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture	Windsor–St. Clair	
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	York North / York-Nord	
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York West / York-Ouest	
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux		
Scarborough–Rouge River	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 152B

N° 152B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 4 April 2007

Mercredi 4 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 avril 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 2, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 187, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I seem to recall that the member for Beaches–East York had the floor.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): You are correct, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

This is another one of what I describe as my bifurcated speeches: start one day and—

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Bifurcated?

Mr. Prue: Yes, bifurcated: cut in half. But it wasn't really cut in half, because it was 20 minutes the first day and pretty close to 40 minutes the second.

I'd just like to recap a little, because there was one point that I made on the last occasion that I would like to better clarify. It was brought to my attention by the member from Lanark–Carleton after we left the chamber, in the members' gallery. He told me that perhaps my spin on a certain element was not exactly the way he wished it could have been. I started to think very carefully and clearly about what he had to say, and in fact he probably was right. It was in my description of the changes to the Assessment Act, which are really almost non-existent in the budget.

I've heard Liberal member after Liberal member stand up and talk about how wonderful it is that they're now going to have a four-year phase-in of any increases and that they're only going to do the assessment once every four years, so that when you get whacked, you get whacked four times as much as you would get whacked individually in any one given year.

I explained during my speech that this was potentially going to cost municipalities a lot of money, because if

you are getting a decrease, you get it all at once. If you are getting an increase, it is phased in over the next four years. I gave an example, that a \$100 decrease would be given to the homeowner immediately in the first taxation year, and a \$100 increase to a similar property down the road would be given a phase-in over four years of \$25, \$25, \$25 and \$25 until that \$100 increase was worked out. I suggested that this was going to cost municipalities a lot of money because they were going to have to reduce the taxes on certain properties without having the corresponding ability to raise the taxes on others, so that for every property where the taxes were raised, they could only collect a quarter of the amounts of money where they were decreased.

The member from Lanark–Carleton pointed out quite succinctly that this isn't going to cost municipalities any money at all, in his view, because what the municipalities, of course, will do is simply raise the taxes for everybody. That is an option which I acknowledge is a possibility, and in fact would probably be a probability, because the municipalities need the funds that they have. So when they hand out a \$100 decrease and can only get a \$25 increase in the first taxation year, the only option they have is to find the \$75 from somewhere else, which will in turn lead to an increase in taxes for all properties within the municipality to cover that deficit.

1850

I don't know whether the finance minister has thought this through. It clearly is illogical. I don't know whether or not the members who have stood one after another to laud this particular portion of the bill are thinking clearly of how this is going to affect the 480 municipalities in this province. Maybe my learned friend here, the parliamentary assistant, will answer how this is going to happen. I know that either one of two things is going to happen: The municipalities are going to get whacked in the short term, although over four years I guess they'd get their money back, or, in the alternative, every single taxpayer is going to have to pay that higher percentage in order to make up the shortfall of, in the example, the \$75 on a \$100 increase that is not charged. That's really, I think, what needs to be said. I thank the member from Lanark–Carleton for giving me some thoughts and allowing me to clarify what I think is a glaring omission and error in this bill.

On the last occasion, I talked about how Bill 187 is one of a compendium of budget bills that are brought forward. It's not just the budget, on the day the finance minister rises in the House to give it, but it's a whole

series of budget bills that flow from that, and this is Bill 187, which gives a lot of substance to what was said on that day. I talked about the Assessment Act. I talked about how it had failed in many other ways, and finished my 20 minutes with the whole child benefit package and how we as New Democrats are not satisfied with a child benefit package that phases things in over five years so that poor children don't get the full benefit for five years. And that heinous clawback which the Liberals had promised to do away with in 2003 will not be done away with: not in this cycle of the election, not in the next cycle of the election, should the House last four years—not until the election after that. I don't think that that promise has been fulfilled, nor should people think that it has been.

Today I rise to talk about the other aspects of the bill and of the budget which I find troubling.

Some of us had the opportunity some few minutes ago to be downstairs at the meet-the-miners reception. As I was leaving to come up here, there was the final speaker at the miners' reception, a gentleman whose name I did not catch but who spoke quite eloquently, from De Beers mining. He was talking about the impact this budget is having upon his particular company, upon northern Ontario, and upon mining in general. In fact, his words at the end were quite chilling. He talked about this tax having such a negative impact that the De Beers mine near Attawapiskat in all likelihood will be the last operating mine in Ontario, because nowhere else in the country and nowhere else in the world that he was able to recount are taxes imposed in such an arbitrary and unfair way. He talked at some length about his assurances to the head office of De Beers in London, to the head office of De Beers in South Africa, and about how he had given assurances that if there was one thing he could give an assurance about in Ontario, it was that we were stable, that people knew what was happening. So even though the quality of the diamonds may not be as high as in some locales, they were plentiful, and the government, he said, could be trusted in a stable environment to make sure that the diamond mine could be mined, and mined out, during the phase and that the profits and the considerable risk that De Beers had taken could be realized.

What he said, again, was chilling because that is not in fact what has happened. He used the words "bushwhacked," "ambushed," "consultation and lack thereof," and even spoke of meeting with ministry officials and being told everything was fine, only to see the finance minister rise in this House and literally bushwhack him, his company, and put the whole mining exploration in Ontario at considerable risk.

I understand why the government has done this. I understand not why they ambush them, but I understand that they're looking for money. That's what this is about. This government sees an opportunity to take \$15 million or \$20 million or \$50 million or \$100 million. I'm not sure what's going to be there by the time it's all mined out. They see an opportunity to take a lot of money from this fledgling company in Ontario. It's the first time

we've ever found diamonds in sufficient quantity for them to be mined and it's the first time that a company the size of De Beers has actually come here to do it. There was an opportunity here to make a few fast bucks, but I'm not sure that this is in the best interests of the mining industry nor in the best interests of the people of Ontario, and I am absolutely not sure it's in the best interests of the people of Attawapiskat, those people in northern Ontario, our First Canadian nation, the people who live in those small communities and who for the first time, in Attawapiskat, can see a real future for themselves and for their children.

Members of this Legislature, and I see some of them here today, had an opportunity, when we were debating and thinking about the revenue sharing bill, the private member's bill that was put forward by my colleague the member for Timmins—James Bay, to travel around northern Ontario to many of what people call reserves, and which I prefer to call First Nation communities, and to see the life and how people live in the far north of Ontario. I know that members who went will agree with me that the living conditions in those communities are shocking; they are terrible; they are bad. There are problems with the youth who don't have employment and who tend to go into drugs, drinking and despair. The suicide rate is extremely high. The housing is very poor. The number of families who are crowded into a single location is something that should cause all of us shame. There are little opportunities to find work. There are no recreational activities in most of them.

But I think the greatest thing that people who went on that tour with me noticed, the thing that struck them the most, was the northern stores they went into in those communities. When you went into the store to buy something which we in Toronto or anywhere in southern Ontario could simply go in and buy—a bag of milk for \$3 or \$4—it was \$25 there. If you went in for a bag of potatoes, which we would buy for 99 cents most times in Toronto, Windsor or London, it was \$20. I remember the member for Willowdale wanted to buy some of his favourite ice cream, which was a Häagen-Dazs of some kind that would cost \$4.69 in the supermarket near him in Willowdale. It was more than \$30 there. These are the communities where the level of unemployment is so incredibly high, where there is literally no future, where people are on welfare, where people don't have money, and this is the kind life they have. This is what they pay for the things that we in southern Ontario take for granted.

I was hoping that the Attawapiskat mine would really do something for them, and to hear the chilling tale from the speaker from De Beers causes me great concern. It causes me great concern not because this government wants the money—of course they want the money. But who really needs the money isn't the government of Ontario; who really need the money aren't the people in Toronto and aren't the people in Hamilton, Ottawa, Windsor or Thunder Bay. The people who really need the money and really need these resources to be developed

and need to be part of it are our native communities, our First Nations people in northern Ontario. We have an obligation, I would suggest to them, to do more than take the money and cause a company like De Beers to stop exploration.

Nearly everyone who lives north of the 51st parallel in this province—not everyone; nearly everyone—is aboriginal. Nearly everyone belongs to one of these small communities that are in despair, and we have an obligation. Some members will think, “Oh, no, this is a federal responsibility,” but I think they would be very sadly mistaken if they think that. It is equally a provincial responsibility because the whole of the area of northern Ontario is made up of a series of treaties, and one of those treaties, the largest one, is Treaty 9, and the people who live north of the 51st parallel have a treaty not only with the crown, not only with the government of Canada, but in 1906 the treaty was signed with the province of Ontario. That treaty says they will be treated in a way that is just and fair, that they will be consulted, that they will be helped, and I think we have an obligation in this Legislature not to say even for one minute that those people are not full citizens of Ontario, and not for one minute that we do not have a moral and a legal obligation to do everything in our power to develop their lands and to give them hope, a future, jobs and prosperity.

1900

I'm hoping the government will reconsider this money they're going to take from De Beers. If you feel it's absolutely necessary to take the money, then take it to invest in Attawapiskat; take it to invest in Peawanuck; take it to invest in Marten Falls, Ogoki, and all the other places we went—in Kashechewan. If there is a community in this province that needs some help, it's Kashechewan. If you're going to take that money from De Beers, make sure it is spent where it is needed and honour the commitments of the province of Ontario in 1906 in the signing, 101 years ago, of Treaty 9. For the first time, do the right thing by the people who live there.

I want to talk about the other things that are found in Bill 187. The next one which troubles me a lot too, because it contains so little, is the whole discussion around the status of the artist. I have heard the minister and members stand up and say, “This is really good,” that what is contained within Bill 187 is something for artists. But I looked at it and I was dumbfounded by what isn't there, not by what is there. What is there is having a Saturday in June as status-of-the-artist day, as if that is going to help. I don't think it's going to help artists a whole lot for all of us to say on that day, “Aren't artists wonderful?” We should all in our hearts each and every day, 365 days a year, say, “Aren't artists wonderful?”

I wore this tie in part for the native peoples today—it's a Norval Morrisseau tie—talking about native people, but also about the artists, who I think in this Bill 187 are not being treated the way they should be. If the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Culture and the whole cabinet are serious, the provisions of the status of the artist need to be reworked. There is nothing in this bill that allows

the minister to change or to enforce the standards of working conditions. There's nothing in here about child performers, and there are a lot of child performers in plays, on television and in movies. There's nothing in here that protects them. There's nothing in here that gives artists tax preferences that we often give to many business people. There's nothing in here to give it to artists.

Artists are among the poorest members of our society. Some might end up being very rich over time. Some musicians end up being very rich. If you happen to be in a really good band and call yourselves the Rolling Stones or some other thing—

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): It's taken.

Mr. Prue: It's taken; that one's gone. But most artists struggle and get by on what is minimum wage or less. They do it because they love their art. They do it because they have an ideal of producing something wonderful that will outlast them. Artists are very poorly paid, and we have an obligation and indeed an opportunity to allow artists that kind of money so they can continue to do what they do, because the heart and soul of any community, and I speak of any community in the world, is vested in the artists and the people who explain it through music, through paintings and sculpture, who explain it through all of the mediums of the artistic mind. That is what defines us. It defines us as Ontarians, as Canadians, it defines us as a people, and we need to do that.

There's nothing in here about training issues. There's nothing in here about the status-of-the-artist legislation that people have been asking for, which this government back in 2003 promised would be undertaken and would be law within one year of the election of the Liberals. It's not there. All that is in this budget, all that is here—and I asked the Liberals; I asked the parliamentary assistant if he wanted to comment on this—is that on a Saturday in June—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: He's the one who will respond. Okay. It is a finance bill, after all. He will respond.

That's all there is. There should be and there could be so much more. That's where we're at.

The next thing, looking down in this bill, that I wanted to comment on was the WSIB and the provisions. Now, I was happy, as I think anybody would be, to see that there was finally an increase. It's 2.5%. It's under the inflation rate, but at least it's something. But I was unhappy to see that that's really all the budget contains, a very modest increase after so many years of virtually nothing for those who are on workers' compensation. I use the old term because it's easier for people to understand.

I had a constituent come to see me this past week. He is a man who had to leave his job many years ago now, I guess 10 or 15 years ago, because he worked around solvents. His lungs became so bad working around the solvents that he was forced to retire. His doctors told him he only had a year or two to live because his lungs were in such bad shape. He received WSIB compensation. He had that compensation, but he fooled them all, because he

lived until he was 65. Now he's 65 and they have cut off all of that. They have told him that if he wants to be compensated, he has to get his old-age pension and he has to go down and apply for the supplement. He is very upset at that. I told him I would raise it in the Legislature. I don't blame him for being upset. He worked all of his life for companies, paid his taxes and was compensated by the courts for suffering grievous harm, and in his old age—because you have to remember, he had to retire 10 or 15 years early—he no longer has a pension from his company that is adequate, because he had to leave it early. He no longer has the WSIB, and his only option now, having lived to 65 and fooled the doctors, is to go and ask for the old-age supplement. He doesn't think it's right, nor do I. I looked in this bill and, apart from the 2.5% increase, there is no real reform to the WSIB, which this party talked about in 2003 and after four years has not accomplished.

I went down to the next one, which was the whole thing about the minimum wage. If I've heard one Liberal talk about this, I've heard them all talk about it, about \$10.25 if you can last it out for three years. I don't think that's enough. We New Democrats believe in a \$10 minimum wage. We've been fighting that campaign now for months and months. Any movement, I guess some people will say, is fine. In fact, the Liberal response is, "It's not enough, but it's a good start." That's the response to almost everything when I hear them speak.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It should have started four years ago.

Mr. Prue: That's where I'm going to come from. If the start was taking place four years ago, it seemed all well and good that it went from \$6.85 in small, little increments until finally, after four years, it made it all the way up to \$8. Now I guess they've seen the light in terms of—

Mr. Hudak: I don't believe them.

Mr. Prue: I don't either, but they appear by this budget to have seen—

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: They believe by this budget that they're going to increase it incrementally by 75 cents, but I ask them to think about this: The campaign for a \$10 minimum wage now, not in three or four years but now, was to lift people to the poverty level, the low-income cut-off figure as set by the federal government for municipalities and for towns in Ontario. Ten dollars for a single person would bring them approximately within \$100 of the low-income cut-off figure. What this government has promised is that you're going to get \$8 now; in a year and more from now you're going to get \$8.75; a year after that you're going to get \$9.50; and a year after that we're going to get you all the way up to \$10.25. That is tantamount to telling people that they are going to live in poverty not for this year or next year or three years, but even at the end of the three years people will be living in poverty, because in this country and around the world it is a truism that there is inflation.

Try to look at the numbers. At \$8.75 a year from now, if there is no inflation, people will be \$2,600 under the low-income cut-off figure. If they work 40 hours a week, they will be \$2,600 below. Now, that's \$2,600 below for a single person. If you're feeding a family, then you're way, way below that. In the year that the \$10.25 finally kicks in, people will be \$800 below, or about 6% below, if they can last that long, if there is no inflation. If there is inflation, that is not going to happen at all.

I listened, again, to the minister in the speech that he gave on the budget and in the scrums that followed. He kept saying, "We have to be prudent." He kept using that word "prudent." "We have to make sure we don't drive jobs out." I don't know, and we still have been singularly unable to discover, where he got that information save and except that he hired some guy from the University of Toronto who seems to have been of like mind. There are many economists, though, who disagree vehemently with what was said. In fact, the only empirical evidence that exists where this has actually been studied, where people have looked at how many job losses occurred or did not occur, how the economy was affected, the only empirical study of this for a large increase was in the state of New Mexico. It's the only one we can find. It quite clearly showed that there was no job loss at all. It quite clearly showed that when that state raised their minimum wage—

Ms. Horwath: It was 65%.

Mr. Prue: Yes, they raised it 65%, in American dollars, from US\$5.15 to US\$8.50, which is slightly more than C\$10. When they raised it in one fell swoop, people said the sky was going to fall in, that people by the thousands were going to lose their jobs, and at the end there were no significant employment effects whatsoever. There were no fewer jobs created and not more jobs created. There were no problems. There were no companies that went bankrupt as a result of it. All there was was thousands upon thousands of people who were lifted out of poverty. Those same thousands of people were able to do things that all of us enjoy on a day-to-day basis. They were able to shop in their local stores. They were able to ride on their local buses. They were able to take their kids to the occasional movie or to the park. They were able to do things that they were not able to do in poverty at \$5.15 but that they were able to do when it was raised to \$8.50, a 65% increase in one fell swoop, with no job loss whatsoever.

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You can ask what happened. I've heard restaurateurs who say, "This is going to create havoc." I don't think so. If you go to McDonald's today, if anybody here has kids or if there are people who like that food—

Mr. Hudak: I like McDonald's.

Mr. Prue: You like McDonald's.

Mr. Hudak: A quarter pounder with cheese.

Mr. Prue: Okay, a quarter pounder with cheese. My friend from Erie—Lincoln says he wants to go there. I don't know what one of those costs today. Is it about two bucks?

Mr. Hudak: A bit more.

Mr. Prue: A bit more than two bucks. I will tell you that a person working behind the counter can make about 50 of those an hour. I once did it for McDonald's. You make about 50 of them an hour. That's about how many you can make if you're one person. Of course, they have multitudes of people, so they can make hundreds of them an hour. That will increase the cost of the meal by about a nickel. They will have to pass that on, but I would think that most Ontarians and most Canadians are generous enough to say, "If it's going to cost me \$2.00 or \$2.50, let's raise it to \$2.55. Let me pay the extra nickel to know that the person who is working behind that counter can have a decent standard of living."

I say the same thing about all the big chains. Wal-Mart pays minimum wage. What is wrong if Wal-Mart pays a little bit extra so that people who shop there can? I would not feel the same compunction of not shopping there if I knew that they paid their people a decent wage. One of the things that Wal-Mart does in Ontario when they hire people is that they tell them that the wage they are going to pay them is not sufficient for them to maintain themselves. In the Wal-Marts in Toronto, they give out a list of the nearest food banks along with your pay stub, and I think that's a crime. I would hope that if we are going to raise the wages, a company like Wal-Mart will have to pay the same decent wages that Canadian companies, similar companies like Zellers or the Bay, would already pay, because they pay higher than minimum wage. If I'm forcing someone like McDonald's or Wal-Mart to pay more, I hardly think that that's going to cause any great difficulty for a Standard and Poor's 500 company. So I'm not satisfied with this, and I'm not satisfied with how these people are generally being treated in this budget.

I looked at municipalities next. I'm looking at the good thing, which I think was the seven-year phase-in for businesses, and I think every single business will be happy with this. I wouldn't blame them for being happy. They've been fighting for it for years. I'm sure they're happy with it. But I also know that many of them are angry because they're not phasing in the educational property tax at any time at the same rate. The educational property taxes paid in many municipalities, including the one I'm from, Toronto, are far higher than in the surrounding municipalities. It's not so much the residents who are paying for this but the businesses, and it is quite literally driving businesses out of large municipalities like Toronto and Ottawa—

Ms. Horwath: And Hamilton.

Mr. Prue:—and Hamilton. My friend is right.

I looked at how much was being given, too, and it seems like such a pittance. This budget allows for \$240 million of phase-out over seven years. It's about \$33 million a year, which may seem like a lot, but there are literally tens of thousands or 100,000 businesses in the city of Toronto alone, and in Ontario I'd hazard a guess that it's probably five times that, and that doesn't seem like very much money when you spread it out. I don't

know whether it's going to have the effect that this government thinks it will, but at the same time, it's costing some considerable revenues.

I looked at the municipalities again, and what all 480 of the municipalities, through AMO, and the city of Toronto, which does not belong to AMO, are asking for is that the government end the download—a pretty simple thing. They have made a calculation which the minister has never, ever denied. I have asked him repeatedly. I know my friend from Erie-Lincoln, as the finance critic for the Conservatives, has repeatedly asked the question, is it true that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario says that the download is costing municipalities \$3.2 billion? I have never, ever had it denied, and I believe it to be true, because not this minister, nor the minister in the interregnum, nor Minister Sorbara before that, have ever denied that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario is correct. We think there is some \$3.2 billion which should be uploaded, and none of that is in the budget.

I know the city of Toronto has cried foul, and I know that some of the other municipalities are crying foul as well, but to add insult to injury—and I asked the question of the finance minister the other day here in the House—the province of Ontario is not paying its bills for the city of Toronto. There are three legislated programs where the province has agreed to pay a portion of the administrative costs. One of those is Ontario Works, another one is the shelter per diems for homeless shelters in Toronto and the third one is for child care. In each of those cases, Ontario has not honoured its commitment to the city of Toronto. They are not paying the administrative costs for Ontario Works up to what has been agreed to and what has been signed by law, they are not paying the per diem which has been agreed to and which has been signed in in an agreement in law, and they are not paying the portion of the child care which is their responsibility. When you look at those three figures, a \$29.3-million underpayment by the province of Ontario for Ontario Works, \$29.1 million in shelter per diems and \$13 million for child care, it adds up to \$71.4 million. That's \$71.4 million that the city of Toronto rightly is asking that the province pay.

I have heard members of the cabinet talk many times about deadbeat parents and about the wonderful government program that has found five deadbeat parents. Remember that? You know, the big announcement to find five people and to force those five deadbeat parents to actually pay up. Well, I think the same holds true for deadbeat governments.

Mr. Hudak: You should make a website.

Mr. Prue: I'm sure the city of Toronto will make a website. I'm sure that the city of Toronto will make this into a political issue. If the government of Ontario does not pay its legislated required bills of \$71 million for these three legislated programs, I know precisely what is going to happen. What is going to happen here in Toronto is the same thing that has happened in North Bay. When the taxes are going out in North Bay now,

they're going out with "the McGuinty tax" on it. Sorry, I had to name it, because that's what they're calling it. They don't say "the Premier's tax"; they say "the McGuinty tax." They're pointing out to the good citizens of North Bay that the reason the taxes are escalating and going up by this amount of money is because the province has not made good on the commitments. I know full well that municipalities across Ontario—and my good friend here from Burlington will attest that that's probably the case out there too—

Interjection.

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Mr. Prue: They may. You may have to fight a rear-guard battle to say how it got there, but they're going to put it out and say, "We are raising your taxes above what we said we were going to raise them by because we have to pay the provincial portion because the province hasn't paid." And I don't blame them for doing that. That's what they're going to do. You know they're going to do it and you know this is an election year and that's what they're going to do to you. I'm only asking that you honour the commitment and the legal document that you have signed to pay the portions of each of those that you have agreed to do. And it's not in this budget. When I asked the finance minister, all we got was a rant and a whole bunch of screams from the back bench about how Toronto has got enough. Whether they got enough or not, that's up to the negotiation, but what is important is that there is a legal requirement for you to pay this money and the people in Toronto expect it to be paid.

Mr. Speaker, I am fast running out of time.

About housing, I was disappointed in housing too. Wow. The province gets \$392 million from the federal government. They sit on it for a whole year and do nothing with it. And then finally in the budget they announce to great fanfare that they are spending \$127 million on housing, \$35 million a year for an allowance for people, a shelter allowance, and \$20 million a year for aboriginal housing. Well, I add those numbers up and they don't come anywhere near \$392 million. They don't come anywhere close to it. And I wonder about a government that promised 20,000 units of affordable housing and has built 6,000, or will have built 6,000 by the time we get to election day. They haven't built them yet. There's 2,000 built and 4,000 in the works. I wonder about that 20,000-unit commitment. I wonder about the new and built homes. I wonder when they say they feel the pain, because I don't think they do. And I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, the responses to date on this issue have been pitiful at best. They are simply spending federal dollars, and they're not even spending them all. Nowhere has this government in four years committed a single penny of their own money to building housing, not a single penny. You can spend federal money. Hell, I can spend anybody's money, and I'm sure that's what they are doing, but they're not spending any of the money that they raise generally in taxes, nor have they made this a priority whatsoever of their government.

There are 170,000 families in Ontario looking for low-cost affordable housing and who are on waiting lists. There are psychiatric survivors who have really been promised a lot more and who live on the mean streets. And then there is the whole problem of affordable housing that was downloaded.

Some of the members had the opportunity, like I did, to go and live in public housing for a couple of nights. And some of the members—and I know the Minister of Housing went into one place for at least one night—saw the atrocious condition of government housing. We are the largest slum landlord in the province, because if you go in there, what you are going to see will disgust you. You will see ceilings falling in, cracks in the plaster, cockroaches, mice, utilities that don't work. You will see urine in the halls. You will see uncleanness. You will see broken windows. You will see roofs leaking. You will see fascia falling off. You will see leaks through the windows, and drafts and cold conditions. And that's what we expect people to live in in Ontario. We downloaded to the cities, and then we tell them, "You look after it." The city of Toronto has done an estimate and says there is about \$300 million that needs to be spent just to bring those units up to snuff.

And what did I find in this budget? I found the \$127 million, but that has to be thrown in not only to new housing, but to fix up some of the old.

We have the whole thing about the balanced budget, and I saw every single person on the Liberal side stand up and applaud the balanced budget. But how did they get there? First of all, they got there on the backs of municipalities by not paying the \$3.2 billion. But they also got there by reducing the contingency fund. Ever since I've been here, and for a lot longer than that, contingencies have run at around \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion, and those contingencies have been used and are necessary. Without those contingencies, we would have been in a lot of trouble during the SARS crisis. Without those contingencies we would have been in a lot of trouble with the great blackout. Without those contingencies governments have a huge problem whenever there is an ice storm or any natural catastrophe. Just ask Kingston or anywhere else. Without those contingencies the cities and the province would have been in great difficulty.

But here we have a budget that's balanced by taking the contingency to the lowest it's been for a long time, from \$1.5 billion down to \$800 million, which is the smallest contingency in the history of this province, as far as I can go back. That's what it is. So you are taking a huge risk in your budget and applauding yourselves for balancing it by having no contingency for an emergency, or next to none. I hope everything goes well. We all hope nothing happens. But it certainly makes me a little uncomfortable.

Mr. Hudak: They should thank Jim Flaherty too.

Mr. Prue: Well, most of the money they got came from the federal government.

Okay, I've got 36 seconds. In conclusion, we don't think this is a very good budget. We think the finance

minister has tried the best he can, I'm sure, to do all the political things, to try to put some fingers in the dike where it was leaking really badly, but in the end he has failed the people of Ontario. He has failed the most poor. He has failed those who thought they were going to get some help for education, for the environment, for more jobs. And in the end I think he's going to have a hard time selling this next October

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I appreciated and listened carefully to the member for Beaches–East York on these two evenings in which he had the opportunity to get in the leadoff speech as the critic. A couple of more general observations: There is little, one can argue, that as government we wouldn't like to do, and more quickly, to support business, to encourage business, to reduce the tax burden. There is little we would not like to do as government to provide money more quickly to those who have the greatest need. There is little that we wouldn't like to do to make our municipal partners healthier than they might already be. But there are realities within which we work.

If we increase the expenditures more rapidly for service functions, if we increase the expenditures more rapidly in uploading those services that were down-loaded, if we increase more rapidly payments through the Ontario child benefit, if we provide additional monies beyond what's already there for the city of Toronto, that puts quite a stress on the capacity of the system to function within our economic means. If at the same time as we're increasing those expenditure levels more quickly than is currently planned for, we expedite the business education tax implementation and expedite further corporate tax reductions and don't use the capacity in the mining industry to acquire some revenue stream—and there's some further discussion around that—we reduce our capacity to increase the revenue stream to pay for the things that we all want to do.

We have this juxtaposition of problems, and that's the balancing act: finding a balance between setting out a planned, structured program to support communities, individuals and families who are in need and at the same time providing opportunity for business growth in Ontario.

Mr. Hudak: I'm pleased to rise and comment on my colleague from Beaches–East York and of course the New Democrat finance critic, Mr. Prue. Mr. Prue is obviously well researched and made some eloquent comments this afternoon, as well as the last time this bill was before the assembly, which was Monday, two days ago. Mr. Prue and I don't always see eye to eye on some issues; on others we do.

He and I have found common ground on assessment reform issues and we're similarly skeptical about the government's new-found religion, their recent conversion six months out from the election on changing the assessment system. Of course, assessment averaging does nothing to control skyrocketing property assessments. It simply means that instead of getting stabbed all at once, they

stab you four times. If your assessment was to go up 100% over four years, that means it goes up 100% over four years, 25% per year.

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Mr. Prue makes the right point as well on the government's other conversion on the road to Damascus, so to speak. The minimum wage was one of the least believable commitments in the budget for a long time. As I said, at least the NDP had campaigned on a \$10 minimum wage for some time. I disagree with the policy, but at least they've been consistent in that regard. Dalton McGuinty's government opposed it, as you know. Then, all of a sudden, he came out of cabinet one day and said, "You know what? I found this quarter. I'm going to up the ante: \$10.25." There was no study behind that, there was no indication where that number came from. Simply, it was to try to up the ante by a quarter, and I honestly don't believe that Premier McGuinty has any intention whatsoever of following through on that policy, particularly where it came from.

I guess I'm running out of time. The last thing I'd ask—maybe the parliamentary assistant will be rising in debate—is that I still have not heard an explanation as to the \$50-million grant given to Magna university, a private university, without any explanation. I hope we'll have that this evening.

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to make a few remarks on the speech by my colleague from Beaches–East York and say that I respect very much the issues and points he has raised in this debate. The members of the government who were heckling and screaming out different kinds of phrases as the member was making his remarks simply need to take some time to listen to the people in their communities and to read local papers to understand that it's not simply people like the member from Beaches–East York and myself—I'll be speaking to this bill in a very short time, later on this evening—who have real concerns and problems with the new-found consideration this government purports to have when it comes to dealing with some of the grinding issues of poverty and the effects they have on communities and families across this province.

I say that coming from a particular riding that has significant experience, let's say, with that grinding poverty. I would hope that members of this assembly would take the time to read the actual comments of people from communities who have been vitriolic in their criticism of this government in the way they are content to leave working people on minimum wage below the poverty line this year, next year, the year after that and the year after that. They're quite content to have that happen, just as they're quite content to continue to have children living in poverty this year, next year, the year after that and the year after that; just like they're content to have families unable to access decent child care for their children this year, next year and the year after that.

It's quite frightening to think that these members of the government side actually think this is a budget to be proud of. I think my colleague reflected very carefully on

the reality of what this budget doesn't do for working families in this province.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to join the debate. In my own riding and community of Oakville, I was on council there for close to 20 years. I don't ever recall a media conference being held to praise a budget that involved the regional chair, Mayor Burton of Oakville, Councillor Tom Adams and Councillor Allan Elgar. It was full-page coverage. Pooling was ended.

Mike Harris brought in a system where every year the people in the region of Halton had to send \$45 million, \$48 million, \$43 million to the city of Toronto so that they, who were unable to control their own expenses, ended up spending it on social services. The people in my riding could not meet the same standard. We did not have the same level of social services in the region of Halton as the city of Toronto did, and yet we had to pay a portion of the bill.

We put an end to that. We put an end to that with property tax reform. We put the property tax reform in place. What this means is that 1.3 million children in Ontario who got nothing from the previous Conservative government, less from the previous NDP government, will now get the Ontario child tax benefit.

Interjection.

Mr. Flynn: No, they didn't get anything before; they're getting something now. One hundred and fifty-five thousand injured workers who got nothing from the previous government, got nothing from the NDP, will now get assistance from this government.

When you look at a balanced budget, that's hard to understand; I understand that. You told us we had a balanced budget last time. We had a \$5.5-billion deficit under the Conservatives. Who are you going to trust, someone who helps the kids, someone who helps the injured workers, or someone who gives this hogwash that they just can't pull through on, people who know that they make promises—the NDP—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The member from Beaches—East York, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Prue: I thank the members for their input, their comments: the member from Pickering—Uxbridge—Ajax, the member from Erie—Lincoln, the member from Hamilton East and the member from Oakville.

I was disappointed, I have to say. The parliamentary assistant talked about balance because I think that's what this government is trying to spin. It's all about balance. It's all about, "Can't do it, but wait. We're going to try to do it over three to five, seven to 10, 12 or 15 years, depending on which provision it is of the budget you're looking at, and that's our balance." I don't buy that, and I was hoping you would talk about some of the very real issues that were brought forward: property tax assessment and how that's going to work. I specifically asked. We didn't hear it.

The member from Erie—Lincoln: We don't always agree, but he's absolutely right. Assessment reform has been really neglected in this budget, and a four-year

rolling average will do absolutely nothing for most people. It will actually, in the end, hurt municipalities, or hurt taxpayers who are forced in the interim to pay the extra monies. On the minimum wage, he's right as well.

The member from Hamilton East was correct when she talked about poverty and the phase-ins. They're just too long, and we're forcing people not to get the kind of support and help that they need right away.

The member from Oakville was quite bizarre when he talked about, "No wonder the 905 is happy; they're getting millions of dollars back in taxes." I don't agree with that, because everybody would have been treated fairly in the province if the download had been uploaded. Every single municipality would have been helped, but this is a bizarre thing because the only municipalities who are being helped are in the ring around Toronto. No one else except that ring is being helped, and I don't know why. The government must be worried about those seats in the 905 to do what they did, because they're only doing right by about 10 municipalities and wrong by the other 470.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): It is a pleasure to rise to speak in support of Bill 187. I will be sharing my time with the member from Sault Ste. Marie.

There was a significant amount of stuff to celebrate in this budget. I'm going to highlight some of the high-level pieces, and then there's one specific area that I'm going to address this evening.

First of all: balanced budgets and five-year surpluses; Ontario child benefit to support 1.3 million children in poverty; property tax review and reform; no new taxes; a tax cut in business education tax; and a \$325-million green fund, with climate change policy coming. That's some of the high-level. There was also long-overdue help and support for injured workers, who were ignored and done in by two previous governments, and we have started to move in a very significant way on a number of fronts for them.

There is also money to build six residential hospices across this province. This year alone, six hospices will be opening across this province because of this budget. In addition to the fact that people would rather be at home in that last leg of the journey of life, in the last chapter of their lives, they want to be at home, but often they can't, for a number of reasons: because they are becoming too ill to stay at home or the family isn't capable of providing the support. The only option before has been to go to a hospital, and that's not where people want to be to die. They want to be at home or in a home-like setting, and these residential hospices will be providing that.

From a dollars-and-cents standpoint, it's very logical, because if you have, in a community, perhaps a 10-bed residential hospice, the residential hospice is fairly inexpensive to operate compared to a hospital. Those 10 people who may be in hospital simply to die will then have a place to go in a residential hospice, and that frees up 10 acute-care beds in our hospitals, which in turn

eases the emergency-room crunch. So you have something there that is very concrete.

I want to talk specifically this evening about what was in this budget for arts and culture. I have a number of things that I'm going to run through from a dollar standpoint, but I do want to address the legislation that's in there as well.

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First of all, the government in this budget will increase its annual funding to the Ontario Trillium Foundation by \$20 million by 2009-10. That's a 20% increase. The government will increase its annual funding to the Ontario Arts Council by \$15 million over the next three years; that is a 38% increase. The government's making an investment in 2006-07—that's this year—of \$10 million to enhance the arts endowment fund. The government is providing an additional \$5 million to the Ontario Media Development Corp. this year. Another \$5 million is going to Ontario's public libraries this year.

There is an increase in annual funding for the community museums operating grants, and that is \$2.3 million starting this year; that is an 85% increase to support our community museums, and that is a very, very significant step, because they too have been forgotten far too long.

The government is providing \$1.2 million to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. The government's providing \$5.5 million to Luminato—this is in addition to the \$2 million already given by this government. Luminato, for those who don't know, is the wonderful new international arts festival that's going to be in Toronto.

The government is also investing \$12.5 million to support the Toronto International Film Festival, and we know what a tremendous draw and a tremendous support that is to our arts community, specifically our film industry.

Arts education: Just prior to this budget, we announced the program enhancement fund. We've done a number of things in the area of arts education, providing funding for 2,000 additional specialist teachers. For the first time ever, we have created an envelope of money specifically for arts—teacher training, instruments etc.—but also, the program enhancement fund provides \$35 million to help improve arts programming in our schools. So there was that, as well.

Now I get to the status-of-the-Ontario-artist legislation, which was also in the budget. I think it's an appropriate place to put it, because the goal of this is to raise the socio-economic conditions of our artists and their quality of life. From a dollars and cents standpoint, arts and culture generates \$18 billion of Ontario's GDP every year, and it provides 250,000 satisfying jobs to Ontarians. But there's more to arts and culture than just the dollars and cents aspect of this, and I'm going to talk a little bit more about that in just a moment, but I want to talk about the legislation itself.

It sets out a commitment by our government, and it conveys the importance of the arts. It will create an atmosphere in which the arts and culture can rightly take

its place as a major foundation piece, but interwoven into the fabric of our lives. It will establish the province's first arts and culture strategy, which is something that's quite necessary. It will also translate into undertakings such as training and professional development opportunities; audience development; promoting artists' health and safety; strengthening arts and culture organizations; creating forums for artists to access information; promoting local cultural tourism and municipal cultural planning. It does, as was mentioned already, declare the first weekend of June as Celebrate the Artist Weekend. But it will also help to elevate the artist to take part in trade missions that we may be undertaking and put them on a level playing field with other businesses and industries that take part in such activities already.

There's a great discussion as to whether or not government should fund things like the arts. I've heard from other people, "Oh, well, you know, arts is a frill," or "It's frivolous," or "It should be extra," or "Government shouldn't be paying for that sort of thing." Quite frankly, not only is the arts and culture industry an enormous part of our economy, but arts and culture are life. That's what we do all day every day. The arts are a primary form of communication, for starters. From the minute we wake up in the morning and our eyes open and rest on that favourite painting on our wall, and we go and we turn on the radio and music comes out of it—that's art. We get up, we cook breakfast and we read a newspaper, we get on the subway and we're reading maybe a magazine, or we're walking to work and we walk past architecture and buildings. And then we rent a movie, go out to the theatre or to a concert. That is what we do each and every day of our lives. Every minute of every day is filled with arts and culture. That is what we are.

Somebody already mentioned that it is an expression of us, but it is an expression of that intangible essential in all of us that we don't generally talk about very often in government, and that's the soul. It also provides the extension of us. To a great extent, I think we would cease to exist if we did not have art and culture to tell our stories. At the end of the day, that's all we are—stories. If there's nobody there to tell our stories, then in fact we cease to exist. Our stories are told through song and painting, they're told on the stage, they're told in a written story, in literature. Those are our stories. They're often told in our museums. This is how we continue to exist and we pass on.

I'm very pleased with what was in that budget from all those standpoints, but I'm not the only one who is pleased. I want to just read a few quotes—before I hand over the microphone to my colleague who's sitting here anxiously chomping at the bit—from the Toronto Star on March 23:

"At Least One Budget had Goodies for the Arts.

"Sorbara is one of the most arts-friendly finance ministers Ontario has ever had, and while culture was clearly not the focal point of the budget he introduced yesterday, there were several pieces of good news sprinkled in the fine print."

From the Arts Advocate: "Through this budget, the Ontario government delivers on outstanding promises in the Liberal Party's 2003 election platform on culture. Ontario's 2007 budget is a goody bag for the Ontario culture sector, delivering on various pledges to, and requests of, the Ontario culture community.

Also, we have from Sam Coghlan, a library director from Stratford: "It is refreshing, almost exciting, to have a government that seems prepared to enter the knowledge economy in accord with libraries and other cultural 'means of mass creation.... It is rewarding to be able to work with a government that supports community.

"Libraries and truly vital art organizations work of their community, and that's why we can work well within our communities. It is rewarding to be able to work with a government...."

Let's see. We have Mark Jamison, CEO of Magazines Canada: "We (want to) congratulate you for your successful effort to secure increased funding support for the OAC on behalf of Ontario's vibrant art and literary magazines, members of Magazines Canada. This long-term commitment will enhance predictable and stable approaches to funding Ontario's rich and active arts community."

I could go on, but I'm being nudged by my partner here beside me, so I will pass the microphone over to him. I was very pleased to see all the tangible support in this budget for so many people, including the arts and culture community.

Mr. David Oraziatti (Sault Ste. Marie): I want to commend my colleague the member from Stoney Creek on her comments, adding to the debate this evening on Bill 187, second reading of the budget bill.

Maybe what I'll do is pick up on the theme that the member from Stoney Creek was following on, which was comments from stakeholders in the community, because we have such a wide range of feedback and have had that over the last number of weeks since the budget has been announced. Of course, it was a balanced budget, as all Ontarians know, so I want to comment on certainly what has been done by our government and compare and contrast that with what has taken place in Ontario under past governments, and I'll get to that in a minute.

The first thing I want to do is share some of the wide-ranging comments that have been made across Ontario by individuals from the health care sector, the education sector, those representing groups of vulnerable Ontarians and the like.

First of all, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce president, Len Crispino, made this comment: "The reduction in BET rates is a major win for businesses in Ontario and will lead to increased productivity, job creation and output. Over 300 communities will benefit from reduced industrial and commercial tax rates totalling \$540 million, including such places as Sault Ste. Marie, Windsor and Northumberland county. This is a big win for the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

At George Brown College, Anne Sado said: "We're pleased with the research funding and the acknowledg-

ment that colleges are playing a role in applied research and commercialization right now. We salute the Ontario government for actually making the funds available for the purpose for which they were intended."

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And a student director of advocacy, Tyler Charlebois of the College Student Alliance, said, "After 15 years of underfunding and seeing classrooms and buildings crumbling at their feet, the McGuinty government is investing additional funds to renew our learning institutions for the future"—after 15 years of underfunding.

Dr. David Bach, president of the OMA, said: "Doctors Applaud the Commitment to Expand Wait Time Strategy.

"The provincial government has made progress in reducing wait times for a number of specific procedures, and we are pleased by the commitment to measure surgical wait times."

Something we're doing in the province of Ontario that is new is benchmarking the wait times across the province so we can best determine how to allocate additional resources. I know it's certainly having a big impact in our community where we're able to demonstrate to the public, in a very transparent way, how their health care system is performing, something that has not been done in this province until recently.

The Ontario coordinator for Campaign 2000, Jacquie Maund, said, "There are a number of steps forward taken in this budget that are the key areas that we have been calling for: improved child benefit, increased minimum wage and investments in affordable housing and child care."

Hilda Watkins, president of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, said, "Teachers have been pleased to see this government's increased commitment to publicly funded education since the election in 2003. Today's budget recognizes responsibilities beyond the school playground for improving student learning."

The president of the nursing association, Mary Ferguson-Paré, RNAO, said, with respect to the budget: "That will really support us, keeping those" additional "4,000" nursing "grads here and assuring that they'll want to stay. We're very pleased with that support."

And how about this comment? I like this one, a personal favourite of mine. Janet Ecker, Toronto Financial Services, said: "The capital tax is widely understood to scare off investment. By committing to legislation to eliminate the" capital "tax by 2010, the government will finally knock down this barrier to investment. We also welcome the move to reduce business education taxes. These property taxes have added significantly to the cost of office space everywhere, but especially in Toronto, the country's capital for financial services head offices. These taxes have made us less competitive when trying to attraction new investment to the city." A very forthright and supportive comment of the progress that we've been making.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): Is that the same Janet Ecker?

Mr. Oraziatti: That is the Janet Ecker, the former Conservative finance minister. Exactly. My colleagues asked me, "Who is Janet Ecker?"

Interjection: That Janet Ecker? The former Tory finance minister?

Mr. Oraziatti: Absolutely. But not only Janet Ecker made positive comments supporting our budget.

Gail Nyberg, the executive director of the Daily Bread Food Bank, said: "It's been a long time since poverty reduction measures were at the forefront of a provincial budget in Ontario. We congratulate the government for having the courage to take on this significant issue, and we expect to see a reduction in food bank use in the coming years as a result. The Ontario child benefit will reduce barriers faced by families with children who are trying to leave welfare for work. At the same time, it will help reduce child poverty and hunger."

One of the things that strikes me is the progress that we have made in many areas, in health care, in education, in supporting business, in renewing our infrastructure and also in supporting some of the most vulnerable Ontarians. This was truly a budget that we can all be proud of as Ontarians, and knowing that we have balanced the budget for the first time in a long time is also great news.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the key areas in terms of the progress that we've made, and compare and contrast some of the results over the last number of years, and to the action that was taken by past governments when they had the opportunity to move their agenda forward on behalf of the people of Ontario and point out some of the differences, because I think they're fairly telling.

The new Ontario child benefit is a remarkably positive step forward in helping to assist some of the most vulnerable in our province. It will assist about 1.3 million children when fully implemented. It comes with a price tag of \$2.1 billion, and it builds on some of our investments in this area.

We've also worked to support and increase the Ontario disability support program by 2%, for a total of 7% under our government.

The commitment to increasing the minimum wage: Each year in government, we have made increases to the minimum wage, and we're going to continue to do that. We've committed to Ontarians to do that.

We've also launched a program with \$127 million for new affordable housing. We're giving seniors the ability to unlock 25% of their locked-in retirement savings, and we're also allowing income-splitting for seniors; I know they're looking forward to being able to do that.

Increases to WSIB benefits: 2.5% over each of the next three years, which will assist an additional 55,000 injured workers. There's more money for legal aid. There's also money for a new college of early childhood educators to support the work that they do in the province.

In contrast, those steps that we are taking certainly were not taken under the past governments. Under the Conservatives, we lost about 9,000 child care spaces—

certainly not a step forward. Under the NDP, social assistance caseloads grew from 770,000 in 1990 to about 1.5 million by 1995, which is not a positive reflection of the work that was done during that time period in this province.

When it comes to education, we've made some massive investments. We've exceeded Rozanski's recommendations of \$1.8 billion. We have about \$2.7 billion flowing into education these days—as well as paying important attention to our infrastructure: a \$280-million fund, leveraging \$4 billion, for the repair of our schools, something we should all be very proud of. Primary class sizes are down, test scores are up, and graduation rates are up. We support public education; we committed to doing that, and we'll continue on that course.

There are numerous steps that we've taken in terms of health care, in terms of creating more spaces for doctors in the province and hiring more nurses, and they are in contrast to what the past governments have done in these areas. They have not been helpful.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. O'Toole: It's always a pleasure to respond to members from the government side who make further promises with respect to what this government would pretend to do. Actually, the people of Ontario will assess whether or not they deliver what they promise—and I think that's essentially the issue that has been raised all this week with respect to the current scandal at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. Pardon me, it's actually called the OLG now, because they spent about \$6 or \$7 million to drop the "C."

Trying to get an answer from the government, in all the rhetoric we hear, is, quite frankly—the people of Ontario should be saying to themselves, "Are we any better off?" That's ultimately the question. The test at the end of it is, in your own lives, are you paying more and getting less? You see it in almost every announcement that they've made in this budget. Even today, there were a couple of announcements by three or four ministers: the ministers of tourism, health promotion, as well as transportation. You should always ask yourself the question, "Are they actually being straightforward with me?" In fact, the evidence is quite the contrary.

So the members have been given their prepared texts, which they've read. One of them actually read the news for one of the TV stations.

This is a spending spree budget—the evidence is clear that the economy is declining—in fact, it would be like a bunch of pirates given shore leave with a purse full of money. Quite frankly, it's discouraging. When you talk about the budget and you're talking at the same time about a Liberal budget, you've got to question whether or not they're spending your money to buy your votes.

I'm disappointed in the comments made today.

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Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to make a few comments on the remarks of the member from Stoney Creek and the member for Sault Ste. Marie, who split their 20

minutes to speak a little bit about their government's budget.

I wanted to remark on one of the things they both spoke about in their remarks, and that was the changes to the WSIB. I have to tell you, the injured workers I'm speaking to are extremely disappointed with the fact that the government has not addressed the ongoing need for them to come cap in hand after 2009 to beg for money for indexing of their WSIB payments. They certainly don't want to be in a position of biting the hand that feeds them, but they are extremely disappointed with the fact that the government refuses to acknowledge—and I see somebody in the back there, behind the Speaker's chair, nipping his head out. Some of that former member's remarks are being quoted as well, when he sat as a Minister of Labour and made some commitments back in the 1980s to injured workers around indexing of their pensions. In fact, the government members can come up and talk proudly about their accomplishments. All you need to do is peel it back a tiny little bit to find out that the very people they claim to have singing their praises in fact are extremely disappointed. I talk specifically about injured workers.

I also wanted to remark about the lack of status-of-the-artist legislation. Particularly, I recall when the artists came around lobbying. Of course, in Hamilton we have a very strong and vibrant arts and cultural community. One of the things the artists talked about, when they were speaking to me, anyway, when they were lobbying this Legislature, was the boom-and-bust cycle of an artist. You could be on top of the world one year, and then the next year basically be making peanuts. That has not been addressed, nor has the issue of child performers particularly, which they raised at that time. It's unfortunate the government couldn't solve those problems.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I want to thank the members from Sault Ste. Marie and Stoney Creek for their comments on Bill 187. I also rise to support Bill 187, and I thought what would be relevant this evening is to talk about what this budget represents for the riding of Huron-Bruce, because I know the members across the way are anxious to hear it.

Interjection: Good news for Huron-Bruce.

Mrs. Mitchell: More good news for Huron-Bruce, in case you missed that line.

There is a savings of more than \$250,000 for Huron-Bruce businesses on business education taxes, \$1.5 million for low-income housing, \$1 million for connecting links, and \$6.5 million for rural infrastructure. One of the other things I would like to raise that I have mentioned in the House is \$600 million for transmission. That is from the Bruce-to-Milton line. Also, for the first time ever in the riding of Huron-Bruce, we now have access to post-secondary education. That is in Kincardine. I can tell you that this has been very well received, not only the post-secondary education available, but at the Bruce training centre we have co-op programs for millwrights as well.

What does the rural infrastructure represent? For many of the communities, it has been outstanding water, sewage, bridges, roads—numerous works that are able to go forward. I can tell you that they are over the top with receiving the money and are really looking forward to moving projects forward that have been six years, seven years, eight years—that's how long some of these projects have been on the back burner that now are able to go forward.

That's what the Ontario budget represents—just a small part of it—for the riding of Huron-Bruce.

Mr. Hudak: I thank the members from Stoney Creek and Sault Ste. Marie both for their comments, but the member from Durham is right: This is a \$22-billion spending spree extraordinaire. Drunken pirates on shore leave would show more restraint than Dalton McGuinty and his gang, and they'd do less damage to the Ontario economy. I'm telling you, you could count on your Omega watch \$750,000 more in spending every hour that Dalton McGuinty has been in office. There's everything out there. Your cat, Chausette, probably got some grant from this last budget.

In addition to giving money to your cat, Chausette, I haven't heard anybody, I have not heard a single member, boast about the \$50-million gift given to Magna corporation that wasn't even written in the budget. The minister sort of ad libbed it, a \$50-million ad lib—your Magna budget, by the way, on the eve of Magna making a multi-billion dollar bid for Chrysler Corp. The Stronachs, no doubt, close to the Liberal family, are real happy with that \$50 million, but there's nothing for grape growers down in Erie-Lincoln, no money set aside for the mid-peninsula corridor, and no break for working families and seniors in Ontario.

I know my colleague the hard-working member for York North is going to address the status-of-the-artist legislation and such, and I'll have a chance—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: But I know that sweet Lou Rinaldi from Northumberland is agreeing with a lot of the things that I'm bringing across.

If I can, since I have all my colleagues' rapt attention, I want to introduce two guests in the assembly today. The hard-working research and communications director for the Canadian Snowbird Association, Mike MacKenzie, is joining us, and, if I'm correct, his girlfriend—can I say that?—his special friend, all the way from sunny California, Michelle Regal. It's her first time in Canada here tonight.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr. Oraziotti: It's great to hear this evening some of the comments from the members opposite. The public in this province know that the budget is now balanced. The budget was not balanced under the last government. They had a \$5.5-billion deficit. That is not going to happen again in this province.

I'm not going to get into—I mean, the NDP is a disaster waiting to happen: four consecutive budgets with \$10-billion deficits. We saw the disaster in my community

first-hand for many years: youth out-migration, no job opportunities, no progress on infrastructure, the social contract ripping up the collective agreements of public sector workers. It's not an option in our community, because we just can't afford to go back there.

But it's very positive that we're taking these steps forward to rebuild our infrastructure in Ontario, to improve our health care, to reduce wait times, to reinvest in public education, to make the largest investment in 40 years in post-secondary education. We've got 86,000 more spaces for post-secondary students in Ontario. Let's help those people in our province reach their maximum potential by reinvesting in post-secondary education.

I know that just outside of Sault Ste. Marie we now have the largest wind farm in Canada. Our energy policy is making significant improvements. We've added 3,000 megawatts to the Ontario grid. The lights are on. The renewables are coming up in use. It's great news as we expand hydroelectricity and work to develop more renewable power, because we're all concerned about climate change, global warming and the like. It's important that we reduce our reliance on coal, and on this side of the House that's what we're doing.

There is a host of benefits in this budget for Ontarians, and it's going to be great to support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak tonight on Bill 187, that bill which encompasses the many things that are enclosed in the budget.

I think the most important thing to understand is that there are some overarching characteristics in this bill, and one of them is that a simple perusal will show you just how many years out this budget is. Most of the time when people are thinking in personal terms about a budget, when you as a family have set a budget, you are thinking in very short time periods. The most would be a year. And it's kind of an interesting thing, because the budget that the Minister of Finance brought forward is of course the budget of 2007-08, but if you spend any time looking at the details of that budget, you will see that it actually extends out a number of years. So I think it's an important thing to understand that at first blush, when those numbers are put out in terms of spending, you naturally think this is something that's going to happen immediately. It will be further in my remarks this evening to demonstrate that many of these things in fact are several years out.

The second thing that I think characterizes this budget is the amount of spending. Other speakers have raised it, but it's important to emphasize that what we're looking at is a total increase of \$22.4 billion in government spending. If you were to look at that from the point of view of an average family, we're talking about \$4,500 of spending. Remember, this isn't someone else's money that we're talking about; this is the taxpayers of this province. It is money that has come out of your pocket, and it is money that the current government has decided in its wisdom how it should be spent. I think it's a fair

thing for you, as an individual, as a family, to be looking at that from the perspective of \$4,500—my money—and how it's being spent.

2010

I think it's also important to keep in mind, as kind of an overarching part of this budget, that 120,000 people have lost jobs in this province. So whenever you're talking about an economy, you've got to reduce it to the actual individuals who have lost their jobs and the kind of impact—frankly, the devastating impact—that has on the individual and on their family. That's another overarching characteristic of this budget, because of the fact that those 120,000 people have become, instead of taxpayers and contributors to the economy through their personal spending decisions and the taxes they pay, whether it's the question of PST or income tax—they have provided for the overall wealth of this province. To suddenly take them out of that opportunity is devastating in a personal way. But also something that I quite frankly think is overlooked by this government is that they are then lost to the economy. They're no longer able to afford the kinds of things that provide the jobs in their own community.

I think it's incumbent upon any government to look at the budget as an instrument for the economy. It's an instrument, because it can provide the carrots to be able to improve the economy, to be able to offer incentives, to be able to give a strong sense of community and strength and optimism. People need hope in their lives. A budget that represents an economic budget—a budget that provides those carrots—quite frankly gives hope. I think that by ignoring the issue of those 120,000 jobs that have been lost, we are taking away the carrot and the hope for those 120,000 people.

One of the other characteristics of this budget is in the area of the property tax assessment. Certainly in my riding, people are very much concerned about the issue of property taxes. I don't have time to get into a discussion and an explanation of the difference between assessments and taxes, but people understand that they are vulnerable as they see assessments increase. We, as a party, have recognized that vulnerability and offered the fact that a John Tory government would look at a 5% base on which to have any kind of changes to assessment, because 5% is significant but it's not on the order of the kinds of things we see in high-growth areas, such as the riding I represent, where there can be huge swings in assessment costs. What this government has done is simply extend from a three-year to a four-year cycle, and quite frankly that does very little. If there have been huge increases in property values over a four-year period, the property owner is still going to have that hanging over their heads as a burden when they're looking at local taxes.

As I mentioned at the very beginning of my comments, I want to look at the issue of how many years out is this budget? The government, for its own reasons, talks in glowing terms about the Ontario child benefit program. But let's just keep in mind that that is a program

that would cover five years. In year one, you're looking at an average of \$250, but it is a five-year program. When people see that the government is advertising that it's \$2.1 billion, they recognize the fact that you as an individual family are going to see \$250. It's a five-year program.

The Ontario disability support program and Ontario Works are each receiving a 2% increase, but again, this starts in November. So people who are looking at that 2% are obviously going to have to keep in mind that it will come almost at the end of the calendar year. The same thing can be said for child care: \$25 million this year, \$50 million next year, recognizing that the province had already made the decision, when they received the one-time federal funding of \$263 million, that they would spread it over a four-year period.

I think many people, certainly people in my riding, were very, very disappointed that the area of children's treatment centres was given \$4 million. There are 21 children's treatment centres across the province, and to be given \$4 million to look at the kinds of wait lists, the kinds of shortages of personnel and expertise that these children's treatment centres have is really not good news.

In the budget, the government introduced \$392 million for housing. What they didn't mention was that \$392 million—the very same number of dollars—actually comes from the federal government. So the province is then making the decisions on how it will be spent—again, over a five-year period.

Legal aid: \$51 million over three years.

The other area that certainly was looking for significant dollars is developmental services. Most people understand that being able to invest in things like children's mental health is an investment against the future; that money well spent in the early years is going to have an enormous benefit over time. Developmental services received \$200 million over four years.

I think you can see from the kinds of things I've given as a brief overview that this budget has to be seen not just as this year's. Obviously they have taken those areas I've mentioned over a number of years, which kind of takes a little bit out of the expectation for people in those specific sectors.

I think it's symptomatic of a number of government initiatives. For instance, people in my riding have talked to me about the hard cap of 20 students in a classroom. What's happening in my area is that parents are getting the phone call that says, "Sorry, your child in kindergarten is going to have to be on a school bus, because they're the 21st kid." The fact that that child's sibling goes to the same school—it's still the same; it's a cap. Families can't believe that they're getting those phone calls.

2020

Coming back to the other point I made, about the fact that this budget doesn't address issues like the economy, I think it's important to remember that this province, contrary to its historical position, was identified as dead last in economic growth in Canada in 2006, and certainly

the projections for 2007 don't look any better. We need a budget that gives people hope, gives people opportunity and puts Ontario in its rightful place as the economic engine of this country. People need to know that this government is interested in those long-term projections.

Long-term projection? One of the elements of this budget deals with GTA pooling. Many people felt that, over time, this had outworn its usefulness in terms of setting a balance between the GTA and the city of Toronto. As you will know, this was an annually negotiated relationship between the GTA and Toronto. The Liberals want to make it clear to everyone that they have saved the GTA taxpayer. But the GTA taxpayer has to understand that it will be by 2013 that this pooling will actually be off the table.

So when you look at the kinds of things that are behind the headlines of the budget, there are some very, very important cautions to be recognized: the number of years out on this; the fact that assessment is certainly not going to be any better for people where there are fluctuations in land value; the fact that this government has spent an unprecedented amount of tax dollars, and taxpayers have to have a feeling of confidence in the way that those have been spent; the fact that there aren't as many economic carrots as I think there should be, an economy that quite frankly is speaking to a high employment rate that allows people to provide income for government in taxation that allows government to be able to spend on those priorities.

Too often, people only think about the spending side of the ledger and forget to think about how that money is actually produced. It's produced with a healthy, vibrant, prosperous economy. That's the key. When we're looking at a budget, we should be looking at those kinds of incentives and those kinds of carrots.

I want to add a couple of notes here in terms of the kinds of things that perhaps lurk in the budget that need to be addressed. One of them is that in the papers at the back; it talks about the question of revenue in the area of energy. One of the key problems to that—obviously there is a lower demand; I don't want to take away from that. But the fact that the government changed its mind on closing coal-fired plants has certainly had an impact, because if from 2003 you have made a commitment that by 2007 you're going to have closed the coal-fire furnaces, people within that industry are going to be making adjustments both in terms of maintenance and upkeep and also in terms of staffing. When you suddenly, in the dying days of 2006, admit that 2007 is no longer a realistic or even an appropriate goal, there are going to have to be significant investments then. They're quite different to those when you know that it's closing.

Those are the kinds of things that lurk behind this budget and I think are most important for taxpayers to understand, that in the stroke of a pen by the government to make a decision to go in a totally different direction—of course they had expert advice, we're told, but the reality is that that's a huge cost to the taxpayer.

I want to close as the critic for culture in speaking about the Status of Ontario's Artists Act, 2007—again, something that lurks in the budget. The quote is here: "The government proposes to introduce new legislation, the Status of Ontario's Artists Act, 2007." I haven't checked to see how unprecedented it is to have this in a budget, but it certainly seems to me that it's almost under the cover of darkness; after three and a half years of a promise that they would introduce status-of-the-artist legislation, it slides in, in the back pages of the budget. I think the culture industry understands the difference between a proper introduction of a bill and sleight of hand.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Ms. Horwath: I'm pleased to make a few remarks on the budget speech by the member from York North. I have to say, I liked her description of the things that are lurking in the budget. I have to say I really like that word "lurking," because the things that are lurking, of course, are very, very long timelines. In fact, they're lurking at length in terms of this government actually taking action on some of the major issues that are of concern to the people of Ontario. That means a long, drawn-out time frame for everything from addressing issues of child poverty to issues of workers who are not being paid decent wages to be able to make enough money to come up to the poverty line. This government is prepared to continue to allow those people to lurk towards sustainable life at some point in the future, although by the time we get there, of course, we will know that they will be no further ahead, because the commitment of this government is to maintain this group of people who are underpaid and undervalued. I don't know what benefit that has. I guess they think it has some benefit.

I also want to commend the member from York North for talking about some of the children's programs that she raised, and the lack of commitment of this government to really appropriately fund the services that need to be funded to help our kids. Particularly, the member raised the issue of children's mental health. I have to tell you, I'm on the same page with her when it comes to that issue. We know very, very well that if we invest those dollars in helping the younger members of our community, children and youth particularly, in mental health crisis, then not only will we save billions of dollars in the future of their health care, but also they will be contributing members of our economy; they will have healthy and secure lives, and they won't be stuck in the mental health system or the criminal justice system. That's an investment we need to make in this province. It's shameful that it hasn't been made until now.

2030

Mr. Arthurs: I'm pleased to add a few comments as well in respect to the member from York North's speech on the budget and Bill 187. The principles, I think, of her comments, if I can gather it in my own mind: The government has seen an increased expenditure over its mandate in the range of \$20 billion-plus, all invested in key priorities for the people of Ontario: in health, in education, in the economy and in the environment. But she's

concerned that things like the Ontario child benefit, OW, ODSP, child care, children's treatment centres, legal aid, developmental services and pooling are all taking far too long to implement.

Budgets are about statements of values and statements of principles as well as a financial document. You can do what kids do sometimes, when they're 18 or 19 and looking for their first car. They'll say, "I'll buy a beater. I'll buy that cheap car that is going to keep me going for a year or so until I can buy something a little better." We can plan the economy and the province in that way and plan our values around buying a beater. "How do we patch this thing together?" It's what the Tories did the last four years in office. They tried to patch it together enough to get through an election. It didn't work then; it won't work this time.

Our value principles, our value statement is: We believe in the Ontario child benefit for young people, those of the working poor and those who are on assistance. We believe in support for OW and ODSP. We believe in support for child care. We believe in support for children's treatment centres, two years in row. We believe in legal aid treatment and developmental services. We're investing in them this year, and we'll invest in them on a going-forward basis.

I would ask the member opposite, the member from York North, what won't you do? What of those would you dismantle if you were to form the government? I dare say I don't think there will be too many, but I'll be interested in hearing what they're prepared to dismantle, if they should form a future government, among the principles that we've sent out.

Mr. O'Toole: The member from York North brings knowledge and passion to the debate, and I believe truthfulness as well, which is refreshing, in her role as the culture ministry critic.

I want to remind members of this omnibus bill, the budget bill, Bill 187. It is huge. For those members listening and for the audience, the people of Ontario, I'm speaking directly to you. It's 275 pages. There is a lot of ink here. There are 41 schedules.

Our critic for the Ministry of Culture had, under the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture Act—I would say that you'd need to look at schedule 24. This is the obsequious language. It says, "The minister may establish and charge fees to recover the costs of any services that are provided by the ministry." There it is: more taxes in the form of user fees. So she's on the right track.

We've seen the drunken sailor budget. We've seen \$22 billion in increased spending. The people of Ontario should ask themselves continuously, "Aren't we paying more and aren't we getting less?" That's the ultimate acid test. It's really the ballot question. I hate to politicize this debate, but you are paying more and not just in culture and recreational issues. You're going to be paying more for water. You're going to be paying more for electricity. You're going to be paying more municipal tax. You're going to be paying the health tax. You're going to be paying more, and are you getting more? It's fundamental-

ly a question. Read the number of pages. The budget is even as large; it's a very colourful red book. You want to be aware that if it's got the colour red, you know you're going to pay more and get less.

In his remarks in this budget, the minister promised to reduce taxes. It takes 11 years for some of these promises to help vulnerable families and children.

Mr. Milloy: I listened with great interest to the speech by the member from York North and some of the comments that have been made. I think the best way to respond, perhaps for those who are watching at home, is to do a little bit of a compare and contrast. A number of years ago, in 1995, we had a government come to power that was faced with a huge deficit, a huge, chaotic financial mess that had been caused by our friends in the New Democratic Party. What did they do? They cut and they slashed and they burned. They cut in health care, they cut in education, they brought in tax cuts that we couldn't afford, and they added billions after billions to the province's deficit.

Let's move forward to 2003, when you had the Liberal Party come into power. What did we do? We inherited an economic mess created by the Conservatives: a \$5.6-billion deficit that they had tried to hide from voters, that we discovered. We had an education system that was drastically underfunded, and we had a health care system that was in trouble. What did we do? We came in in a step-by-step, incremental approach, and we started to make significant investments in terms of public services. We started to take a look at some of the problems in the environment, a ministry they had cut in half. We've continued those investments over four years and at the same time we've paid off the deficit in this province. We've brought forth a small surplus and we've had a balanced Liberal approach.

What it means is that as we enter in—and let's face it, this is the final budget of a four-year cycle—as we take a look at it, we look at it with pride because we've started to restore public services in this province, we've started to restore some integrity to the environment and we've started to think about those who are less fortunate. I'm very, very proud of our record as a Liberal government.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for York North, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Munro: I appreciate the comments from the members for Hamilton East, Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, Durham and Kitchener Centre.

I want to first of all respond to the member for Kitchener Centre: If you were to say that in my riding—there's almost \$100 million worth of investment that came into the hospital in Newmarket in the period of time you referred to. The fact that we saw a hospital, for instance, that moved from being simply a local hospital to a regional cardiac centre and a regional cancer centre has meant that the very best people have come to medicine at Southlake in Newmarket. That comes from the kind of investment you described as a cut.

I look at the proliferation of schools that came about as a result of the new formula that allowed boards to

create their priorities and then respond to them—so, just in the areas of health and education, many more examples.

But the other thing that I think is important is to go to the member for Hamilton East, and certainly we share the kinds of concerns around the importance of making investments in the early years and recognize that those investments not only provide an opportunity for people to lead useful, productive and happy lives, but it also means, from the standpoint of the community, that they are not a dream.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to have about 20 minutes or so to talk about the ominous, lurky, omnibus Bill 187—just some of the adjectives that have been used to describe this budget bill.

I'll tell you this right now: I have a number of different issues that I want to raise. There are a number of real concerns I have with the budget, and I sure hope my papers don't all slide off the end of my desk, which tends to happen from time to time. I'm really glad my friend from Trinity-Spadina isn't here, because I tend to take up two desks when I'm doing these speeches and he sometimes gets a little sensitive about that.

The first thing I want to talk about is just some reflections on the way my community in particular received the budget. I've got to tell you that they are not happy. They have not been happy, no matter what kind of person you talk to, whether it's somebody who's an elected official, whether it's somebody who's a bureaucrat at the city, whether it's an anti-poverty activist, whether it's an environmentalist, regardless of whether it's an artist. Regardless of whom you're talking to, people see through this budget for what it is. It's the very disturbing reality that people have come to that this 11th-hour budget of the dying days of this government sends a few crumbs here and there and tries to pretend that if you just snuggle up and be their friend, in three years, five years or seven years you might actually get some attention to the issues you've been trying to fight for that for their entire term in office have been soundly ignored.

The first, very critical issue that faces my community is the fact that they were left out of a permanent downloading solution, and that's something my community simply no longer can sustain. The city of Hamilton has come, cap in hand, year after year to this government, asking for some financial assistance to deal with what has been colloquially described as the social services deficit or the social services funding gap. We all know that the downloading cost to the municipality in Hamilton is closer to \$30 million than it is to the \$17 million that they asked for this year, of which the government gave them \$12 million. Again, they want to say, at least the members from Hamilton—not including myself but the government members from Hamilton, whom I will not name, but they know who they are—"Gee, we should be thankful."

2040

In fact, the finance minister told me yesterday, as I repeated today to a bunch of workers outside of city hall who are facing the loss of their jobs within a couple of short weeks, whose look of despair, anxiety and outright fear was something to behold—and some of you members across the way need to look at that and acknowledge the fact that we need to save some of these jobs in the province and not simply be happy to watch them walk out the door. Nonetheless, when those workers were told that the finance minister told me in question period yesterday that Hamiltonians should be thankful—thankful—for this budget and thankful for all that this government has done for Hamilton, the jeering was deafening. The people of Hamilton know very well that this government has done very little to solve, and to even sit down and work on solving, some of the systemic concerns that city has. Those systemic concerns are everything from grinding poverty—and I have to tell you, I represent a riding with the lowest per capita income in the entire province. There are people in my riding who have said to me, “We don’t like it when we get described in that way.” Of course people don’t like to have that description put upon them, but the bottom line is that it’s the reality.

When the finance minister was talking about his budget in his leadoff speech and said something about invisible poverty—holly smokes, come to Hamilton East. You don’t have to talk about invisible poverty, because it’s very visible; it’s right there, staring you in the face. Maybe that’s what the finance minister and the cabinet need to do. They came to Hamilton, to the centre core, sat in our convention centre, had a little meeting and thought that that was going to say they’re hearing what’s happening in Hamilton. Do you know what? There’s no way that a finance minister can say that poverty is invisible if he actually visited Hamilton centre, because it ain’t invisible. I’m telling you, this budget does nothing to help with that systemic problem in the city of Hamilton.

Another systemic problem that has not been resolved by this government, notwithstanding the fact that they solved it for the 905 region, not including the 905 part of Hamilton—but for York, Halton and Peel they solved the downloading problem. For those well-off, newer communities, they solved the downloading problem. But Hamilton has to go cap in hand again next year and hope they get at least a portion of the deficit of social services that they’re paying, that they simply cannot afford. Today I spoke to our mayor, as a matter of fact. Do you know what our mayor said to me? Our mayor looked in my face and he said to me, “We cannot continue to be in a situation where we’re sending every year the request, the begging, to the province for them to help us with social services.” With fear in his face, he said, “The economy has been doing well these last few years.” And of course we all know that although the economy is doing well, there are very few people who have been benefiting from that good economy.

It’s shameful, shameful that government members can get up and talk about increased social services going through the roof from 1990 to 1995. Of course they were going through the roof. There was a frigging recession in the economy. How were social services costs not going to go through the roof, when we were in a recession? But where is the excuse for having an excellent economy for the last dozen or so years? You know what? We should call them the dirty dozen. Do you know why we should call them the dirty dozen? Because of the dirty, nasty tricks that were played at the lowest echelon of the economy. That’s low-wage workers, whose wages were never increased and whose minimum wage still is not going to get them above poverty in some five years, when the government finally decides to get around to getting them above \$10 an hour. It’s a dirty, dirty dozen years when the child poverty rate in this province continued to escalate under the Liberal government and the Tories before them. It’s a dirty, dirty dozen years when you see women workers and immigrant workers still not being able to make ends meet. And it’s a dirty dozen years when we didn’t see any movement at all towards positive investments in things like child care. So, yes, it was a dozen years of bad times for the lower echelons of the economy, what we call the working poor. Do you have to put labels on them? We’ll call them the working poor; we’ll call them the children living in poverty. We can slap any label on them that we want, but the bottom line is that it’s a shame in this province that when we have a decent and good economy, the only people who benefit from that good economy are those at the top. And that includes the members in the House, who got themselves the 25% pay increase and didn’t even deign to look at the fact that they’re only flipping a quarter to the people making minimum wage in this province. It’s a disgrace and it is shameful. So, no, I’m not very happy about this budget and I’m not very happy about this Liberal record for four years, and I can tell you that the people of Hamilton see things more my way than they do the way of the government members across the way, who like to pretend that they’re doing such a great job.

I have to tell you, when I was in my community today, the big issue was job loss. It’s another issue where people cannot understand why the government is content to watch good-paying manufacturing jobs walk out the door. I have to tell you, in a community like mine, that means that people who used to make 24, 25, 26, maybe even 28 bucks an hour, who had pensions and who had good health benefits, no longer will have those. They’re going to go to an unemployed help centre and they’re going to go to a worker adjustment centre, if they’re lucky to have access to one, and if they’re really, really lucky, they might be able to find a job for 14 bucks an hour or 12 bucks an hour—no benefits, but at least they’ll have a job. Then they’re going to have to tell their kids, “Well, sorry, we were going to try to make some contributions towards your post-secondary education, but guess what? That’s not going to happen now. So you’re going to have to hope that by the time you get to college

age, by some miracle tuition is affordable,” and we know that’s not likely to happen. “But at least hopefully, when you get to that age, you’ll have a credit rating that will allow you to grow a big, huge debt on your back so that once you start working, you can worry about paying off your debt. Maybe by the time you’re eligible for a pension—oh, if there are pensions in the province of Ontario by then—you’ll have paid off your student debt, never mind raise a family.”

The issue of jobs in my community is a significant one. In fact, just a quick tally today: We have 360 jobs that are being lost at Hamilton Specialty Bar. That’s what the rally was about in my community today. We know that there are hundreds and hundreds more, some 600 to 800 other jobs, where at least layoffs are happening at a particular plant called National Steel Car. So that’s another couple of hundred jobs—I think it was 600, although I can’t remember the exact figure; maybe it was closer to 400. Nonetheless, there’s another plant just down the highway that closed for another couple of hundred jobs. So there you go: Just with a quick tally of what’s happening today, a snapshot, over 1,000 jobs are being lost in my general community.

What does that mean for the economy of that community? It doesn’t mean good things; it doesn’t mean good things at all. So jobs are a big issue that has been ignored for four years, good-paying manufacturing jobs and the lack thereof, and the inability of this government to really get serious about trying to maintain those jobs, never mind create new ones. That has been significantly problematic as one of the systemic issues that face the city of Hamilton.

There are a couple of other things that I thought it was really important to get into, in terms of my remarks around the budget. Again, there are many that I’m not going to talk to in great length, and those include some of the concerns I’ve had for many, many years in the time I’ve spent, first as an activist and then as an elected official in my community, one of which is affordable housing. But I know that my colleague from Beaches–East York already talked about that a great deal, so I’m not going to delve into that.

What I do want to remark about a little bit is the issue of the workers’ compensation, WSIB. The government is patting itself on the back, and in fact the minister was in—go figure—Hamilton trying to sell the bill of goods of all the wonderful things they’re doing for injured workers. I have to tell you, injured workers in my community are basically saying that the government has provided nothing but crumbs, and the crumbs they delivered have a stale-date on them, and the stale-date is 2009, at which time injured workers, who only asked for a few things—one was some retroactivity to acknowledge the fact that they have not been getting indexation; they have not been getting a cost-of-living increase for a very, very long time in this province. So they wanted a little bit of retroactivity to acknowledge the fact that they have been losing ground economically under a system that doesn’t allow them to go after their employers one

by one. They have to be part of the insurance system. The insurance system was put in place to try to give them some coverage on their wages if they were injured on the job, and that’s unfortunately a system that is not working for the injured worker; let’s put it that way. So, no, they didn’t get retroactivity. What did they get? They got an increase this year of 2.5%; the same for next year; the same for the year after that. Then it’s up to the government. The way it’s written is that the government can then make ongoing adjustments as they see fit, in any calendar year from there on after, or some such.

2050

What injured workers are being told is, “No to the retroactivity, and yes, you’ll get a little bit of an increase this year and a little next and a little next, but after that, you have to do exactly” what they have been doing for quite some time in this province, which is to come back to this place and lobby, come cap in hand, begging for enough of an increase to just cover off inflation so that they’re not having their benefits reduced every year by inflation.

Do you know what? I think every single party in this Legislature, over time, has spoken about the need to really give a fair shake to the injured workers, and I think it’s time that we do that. Although the government is going to be patting itself on the back saying, “We’re helping out injured workers,” the reality is that injured workers are saying things like this:

“What did we get? No retroactivity (not even when this government took power) and only a fixed percentage (2.5% versus 25% for MPPs?) until January 1, 2009. I guess this is nothing to scoff at when you’ve had nothing, but what will happen after January 2009? Cap in hand again, and the faint hope to please the powers that be. Precisely what we were supposed to avoid.”

Certainly the injured workers are very, very disappointed with the government’s lack of attention to their issues. There are other, more specific issues around deeming that they’re not happy with. Once again, the government has ignored the Brock Smith report. People in this province may not be aware, but some 30% of workers in this province are not even covered by WSIB. There is no acknowledgement whatsoever about the need for some presumptive legislation, in terms of firefighters particularly, and other workers who are exposed to toxins on the job and end up with cancers and other conditions as a result of exposure to these kinds of workplace toxins.

The one thing that they did do was increase the size of the board by four members. Maybe that’s for these Liberals who are not going to get re-elected come October 10. Maybe those four positions are so that four of you who don’t get re-elected can be appointed to the WSIB board. Perhaps that’s what that was all about.

Nonetheless, injured workers are again not pleased with this budget, notwithstanding the fact that the government members are being told that they are.

I want to finish off with children’s issues overall but two specific pieces, one being the child benefit and the other being child care all together. I’ve got to say that on

the child benefit, again, it is just not acceptable that children living in poverty are being told that they have to live in poverty for another five years. That's what they're being told. That's what the budget says.

It's interesting, because the parliamentary assistant said that this budget is "a statement of values." Well, congratulations. If your values are balancing the budget, which they keep talking about, on the backs of poor children, then shame on you. If it's about balancing the budget so that you can give a capital tax break to banks and insurance companies while children remain living in poverty in this province for the next five years, then shame on you. If those are the values of this Liberal government, then I can tell you, I'm very proud to not be sitting over there and to be sitting over here, because those are certainly not my values. It's pretty scary when you know that at a time of economic growth in this province, the values of the government are ones that keep children living in poverty.

Yes, they put together this child benefit, but people who are not actually aware of the details of that need to know that it's not even the same amount of money as it would have been if they had gotten rid of the clawback that they said they were going to get rid of in the first place. Over the next couple of years, eventually, the clawback will go, although that was a campaign promise: It was supposed to go three and a half years ago, and it didn't. So what would that be? I guess it would be eight years; eight years before the clawback is finally ended, if in fact this government can get the support of the people for another term of office. I certainly hope not, because this government has shown its colours, and its colours have got nothing to do with the dignity of children and their ability to have a decent quality of life and a decent fighting chance for the future.

I want to end by talking about the government's horrible track record, if you want to call it a track record at all, on the child care issue. I have to say, I was absolutely floored. I really was expecting—I don't know why I was; I guess it was naïveté on my own part—that this government would finally invest provincial dollars in child care. Especially when Fraser Mustard came out with the Early Years 2 report and when he described Best Start, which was—if I recall, that was one of the major planks of this government when they were running for office: There was going to be a child care program in the province of Ontario. They were going to invest \$300 million on an annual basis in a child care program. Why? Because study after study and empirical evidence after empirical evidence show very, very clearly that the early learning and care of children is pretty much the only thing where we can make sure that if we invest in that, it's going to bring this economy to where it belongs. It's going to make sure that the kids of the future are going to be able to compete with jurisdictions around the world that are already far, far ahead of us in terms of early learning and care.

These Liberals, when their Liberal buddies in Ottawa finally were forced into making commitments on child

care by Jack Layton and then all of the sudden that government went down the tubes—they used the Conservative government of Harper and his tearing up of those agreements as an excuse to pull away from child care. I say, shame on them.

In Quebec, some 60% to 70% of kids have child care in that province. What is it in Ontario? It's 10%; 10% of children in Ontario have access to child care. That is an absolute shame and a disgrace. I have to tell you that when I found out that not only did they not make good in this budget on that \$300-million commitment—we never saw it in their term of office; we know we will never see it; and now they're admitting that they're totally backtracking and have totally ignored the calls by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and others to make good on that promise. Instead, what they're doing with the \$100 million that Harper has announced in his budget—this government has decided they'll spend \$1 out of every \$4 on child care, and the other \$3 is going back to their statement of value to cover off the deficit in the budget. So they're going to suck that money out of child care and use it to make their budget non-deficit; \$1 out of \$4 is going to go to child care. Not only are we not getting the federal dollars invested in child care and we're not getting the \$300 million invested in child care—and I've got to tell you, that's a shame in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I want to begin by first of all complimenting my colleague from Hamilton East. I've got all the time in the world for her passion and her concern for the community. We served together for some time on Hamilton city council and we fought many of the issues that she has identified.

Having said that, I want to just point out a couple of things that need to be pointed out. The issue of coming cap in hand is one that I think we all recognize is a folly and needs to be corrected, and that's why the good Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing recommended to our government that we move forward with the joint fiscal and service delivery review, I think it's called. It's actually, across the province, a \$3-billion issue—the so-called previous government's revenue-neutral down-loading. I agree with the member from Hamilton East: It is a shame and it needs to be fixed. I'm confident that this government, working with the partners to actually get a fix that works, is going to make some good things happen there.

I want to say also that it wasn't easy to come up with \$100 million in support for Stelco and the pensioners there. That was something that all of the members from Hamilton, including the member from Hamilton East, fought for, and we were successful in getting that.

I've received a lot of e-mail traffic in the last little while from the chamber of commerce about our business education tax, from children's mental health advocates, from the developmental sector and from the hospice sector, all praising our budget to the hilt. I read an editorial

earlier in response to the opposition day motion. The poverty task force has also said that we need to take a multi-dimensional approach.

The social justice advocates that I relate to in the city think quite highly of this budget.

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Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): My concern with this budget is that perhaps the government has run out of promises to break and has, in this budget, just listed more new promises so that there's a new stash of promises that can be broken.

The people of Burlington will have paid, by the time this year is over, \$105 million of health tax—it's not a premium; it's a tax—and they have received no benefit from that. The hospital has received \$1.5 million to do some design work for planning for a new part of the hospital. But that hospital is not on any priority planning list. So there's a promise in there somewhere, but the people of Burlington cannot take that to the bank because there is no guarantee that this hospital will ever get the expansion that it deserves and has been waiting for. The people of Burlington have been neglected.

It is not fair to keep critical issues in the province of Ontario at bay when this government has collected \$2.5 billion in the health tax and some ridings have absolutely nothing to show for it. In fact, some assessments that have been done show that Liberal ridings have benefited from this health tax far more than any other ridings in the province. Party politics need to be parked at the door.

With respect to the budget, the people in Ontario are paying \$1,800 more per person in taxes since this government—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I can't help but wonder what the people out in television land must be thinking. On the one hand, we've got the Tories saying, "You've spent way too much money." We've heard that a number of times tonight. On the other hand, the NDP is saying, "You aren't doing enough; you aren't spending enough." So the first question that I have is to the Tories: Where are you going to cut \$2.4 billion out of health care, like your leader has promised to do?

To the NDP: I too agree with Mr. McMeekin here, that I admire your passion about the issues. But let me just tell you what we're doing in housing. Why don't you talk about that? One hundred and twenty-seven million dollars were sent to all the municipal housing service providers just at the end of last week for housing purposes in our municipalities clear across this province, to be utilized by the municipalities as they best see fit.

Secondly, we are providing 27,000 families—27,000 families—with housing allowances. To put that in perspective, that means that in each one of our ridings, on average about 250 to 300 low-income earners will be helped with their rent payments with the housing allowance program that will go into effect later on this year. I think that is a tremendous benefit to those individ-

uals who are paying way too much of their money currently for rent. We realize that no one should be paying more than 35% of their income towards rent. What this budget is doing is helping the low-income wage earners who have children within their families with a housing allowance that I think they deserve and this government can be very proud of.

I would want you to talk about some of the really good things in this budget. You know that they're there; that's why you never raise them during question period. You haven't for the last couple of weeks, but the people of Ontario know that this is a good budget for the vulnerable people in our communities.

Mr. O'Toole: Quite frankly, the member from Hamilton speaks with passion and very much a commitment to the issues of vulnerable people and others. I give her credit for always being consistent and true to her word. As she said, she's glad she's not on that side of the House because she'd be disappointed.

I was quite impressed with the member for Burlington and her passion. I've noticed, sitting beside her, that her passion for her community and for her region is apolitical. She's quite frankly aware of the deficit from this government for her area. The broken promises that she alluded to on health care are a good start. Not unlike Durham, they've put them on a string and they're dangling them, the people in Burlington and the region. And there's a promise, a promise that could be broken in a moment by both Premier McGuinty and Minister Smitherman, and that's the security that the people of Ontario are missing. It's this trusting in government's promises, whether it's in health care or even in the budget. Remarkably, I think some of the promises in the budget are well-founded, but the problem is, as the member for Hamilton East said, some of these promises take to 2014 to be implemented.

The national child benefit is a perfect example. I think she'll probably address that in her two-minute response.

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: That's fine, and we would support the initiative of the flow-through of those federal dollars. But what the Liberals have done is taken four years to implement it and they're going to take another seven or 11 years to actually take it from the measly \$200 to the \$1,100 those families are entitled to.

I support the member for Hamilton East. She's consistent, she's an advocate and I trust the things she says on what this government—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Member for Hamilton East, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Horwath: I want to thank the members for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot, Burlington, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the member for Durham for their responses to my remarks.

I want to start by saying that although my friend from the Hamilton region, or Hamilton city now, is quite defensive about some of the things he thinks have been a success in terms of the budget, I can tell him very seriously that—I know he was starting to talk about

social justice activists—although some of the leadership in those organizations have been told to play nice and to be good and not be too critical of the budget because, goodness knows, they don't want to have anything reversed on them if this government should happen to get a second mandate, in reality, they're very disturbed by the lack of commitment to the poverty issues that are here.

The minister likes to say that it's either you spend too much or you don't spend enough, and so we're doing great. What I've got to tell you is budgets are all about priorities, and I don't disagree with the parliamentary assistant who said earlier that they are value statements. I value our children much more than I value a tax break for banks and insurance companies. Sorry, those are my values. That's the kind of thing I would have thought the Liberals would have finally gotten around to in this, their very last budget, in their dying days of government. Unfortunately, they never did. That's something that I think the people of Ontario are going to have to make comment on come October.

I want to end with a quote from the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. They say that there have been no new provincial investments in early learning and child care in over 10 years. "Child care in Ontario is more fragile and unstable than ever, mainly because the provincial government has failed to make good on its election promise to put more provincial funding into the system." That's from the Ontario coalition. We really need to turn around the ship here and get to the priorities, which are our children.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London—Fanshawe): I'm privileged and honoured to stand up and support our budget bill. It's a great budget. I've been listening for the last couple of hours to the opposition, to the Conservatives and the NDP, talking badly about the budget.

I'm wondering why the opposition, during question period, didn't ask our ministers, our government, about the budget. I never heard any questions about the budget. They got caught up in talking about gaming and gambling and all this stuff and never talked about the budget—the most important budget ever in the province of Ontario.

I guess if you go back to our record since we got elected, the first budget talked about health care and how to fix health care. The second one talked about post-secondary education. The third one talked about infrastructure. This budget was talking about the social infrastructure of our communities across the province.

I know we have to do more on different elements: supporting child care, building more housing and building more roads, fixing the hospitals, building more schools and spending more money to create more child care spots. I wish the member opposite from Hamilton East was able to convince the federal NDP leader, Jack Layton, not to collapse at the federal government, because we were close to having \$1 billion invested in the

province of Ontario that was going toward the children in our province.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

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Mr. Ramal: I know that since we got elected, we have been committed to dealing with the poverty issue. To deal with the poverty issue, we increased the minimum wage to \$10.25. If you want to add the supportive housing and if you add the other support for the working poor, it will be almost \$12 to \$13 per hour. That's our strategy to support all the people who want to work. We believe in supporting the hard-working poor people, because we on this side of the House want everyone to be able to work and also put food on the table, and also to deal with the economy. I want to tell you something very important. We believe strongly that we as a government, as people of Ontario, have to give a lift for the vulnerable people among us, because we believe strongly we have to all walk together in order to have a prosperous province. This is our strategy—to give a lift to the poor among us, to lift the hard-working poor among us, because it is the only way we can have a prosperous province.

Interjection: Opportunity.

Mr. Ramal: Of course, we have to give them the opportunity. Without opportunity, we cannot get ahead in the province of Ontario. And unlike the government of Harris-Eves, who slashed 25% from the social budget, who clawed back and took the money away from the poor people, in this budget we've invested more than \$2.1 billion in the social structure to help the vulnerable people among us.

Besides all the spending on the social infrastructure—more support for education, more support for the universities and colleges, more support for health care—we balanced the books, we balanced the budget. Nobody balanced the budget in the past. I know the Conservative government before us had to sell the Highway 407. They had to sell many assets of our government, our crown properties, in order to balance their books. And also, before we got elected, they had a forecast of a \$5.6-billion deficit, and they thought, "We balanced the books." You know why they said they balanced the books? Because they were going to sell the LCBO. That's what they counted in their account book. That's not the way to build the economy.

To build the economy, you have to continue to invest in business. In order to build the economy, you have to invest in the roads and highways. In order to continue to invest in the economy, you have to invest in research and innovation. That's what we do on this side of the House. I'm proud to be a part of a government who believes strongly in investing back in the small municipalities, in the rural area, in the larger and small urban societies, because there's no way a small city by itself or a place by itself can run the government or can run the province. We have to make a balance from the south to the north, from the west to the east. All the elements of society and all

the parts of the province have to work together in order to create a great province, a strong province.

I know that demand is great and so many different issues face us, and this budget was so great in terms of supporting the poor children among us. We have to look after our vulnerable people, to invest back in health care. We have to invest more money in mental health issues to support many people facing that dilemma in our society. I think it's the commitment of our government to not forget our vulnerable people. That's why this budget came strongly to support those people and to make a difference between the people who work to make ends meet and the people who don't want to work, and also to make sure that all the people who are able to pay taxes are able to pay them, and we invest them in a good element of our society. That's why this budget came: to create a balance among all the elements of society.

I know that the Conservatives don't like our budget because this budget was great; it tackled all the issues. We've increased the minimum wage, and the other time invested more money in different elements of our society—supporting factories, to be able to maintain their existence in Ontario.

I will give you an example. We have a young factory in London, a great factory, Diamond Aircraft. Diamond Aircraft builds small planes in London, Ontario. This factory is looking for support, and our government, our Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, came up with a strategy to give them some kind of support. We gave them a \$10-million loan to be able to compete on an economic level and also on an international level. Besides that, we invested \$1 million to train skilled people to work in that factory. This government believes that this is a vision and a strategy to help other companies to come to Ontario and invest more money in Ontario.

Our strategy in the auto industry: We've invested so many millions of dollars to attract many great factories to come and open in Ontario. I will give you an example. Toyota in Woodstock, Hino and many other factories are expanding because of our investment and our trust in them. Ford Motor Co. in Oakville and many others like our strategy, because we believe strongly that by supporting those companies, they can come and open in Ontario. They can feel comfortable because we're providing not just financial support but we're also providing the workers with health care protection, with health care services. We have strong public education. Besides all these elements, we have colleges and universities that can invest and give workers the skills they need badly in order to continue to produce at a high-quality level. This is our strategy on this front.

I was listening to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing talking about investing money in municipal housing. More than \$127 million can be divided across Ontario to help many poor people who cannot afford to pay for rent. We are also investing in 27,000 allowances to support people who cannot pay full rent. This is our strategy. We have not forgotten anyone in our society.

Besides that, we've invested more money in injured workers who hurt themselves in their work to build this province, to build our economy. We gave them a 2.5% increase for the next three years. I know it's not a lot, but we have to work within our budget. We have to make it balance. It's more than the Conservative Party paid them in their last eight years, and more than they invested in anything.

In the meantime, we continue to support legal aid, to create a legal department to support poor people who have no one to talk on their behalf. I think it's a good strategy. It's our strategy.

We continue to talk about good things in the budget. We also invested more money in the north, because as you know, the north faces some difficulties. By investing more money, by facilitating so many different businesses and services in the north, we can keep them functioning very well, because without the north, we could not survive. We have to have the investment go to every part of the province of Ontario.

Also, we don't want to forget the seniors among us who worked hard during their lifetime to provide us with good economic growth, to give us the joy we have right now in Ontario and the economic growth that we enjoy. Those seniors worked hard when they were young. They worked in the factories; they worked in the offices. They did their best to provide us with what we have today.

I think it's a great budget. Let's talk about education. We've invested more than an extra billion dollars in education, because we believe strongly that without investing in education, we cannot have an educated community and society. The only way we can compete on an international level is by educating people, by innovation and research. That's why we have a commitment to many research facilities in Ontario. I was proud and honoured to be with the Premier and my colleagues Chris Bentley, Deb Matthews and Steve Peters last week when the Premier came to London to invest \$23 million to support the John P. Robarts Research Institute. Everybody knows the Robarts institute and the great job it does in Ontario, and what it did in North America by creating so much different machinery to help in health care. This is our commitment.

Also, we're not going to stop there. We invested \$5 million in London-Fanshawe as a part of our strategy to provide London-Fanshawe with a facility, a centre, to train many people in the London area to provide the factories, like Ford, CAMI, Hino and Toyota, with skilled technical people. This strategy came from our government. That's why we have a vision, not for one or two or three years; we have a vision for 10 or 15 years.

2120

In this investment, we haven't forgotten about the environment. We created the greenbelt. The greenbelt was the greatest mission and thing that has happened in modern history: 1.6 million hectares, which is a great area to create a good environment and also leave the area around cities green, which we enjoy on a daily basis.

Also in this budget were two million trees to be planted across the province of Ontario. I thank the Minister of Natural Resources for giving me 1,000 trees to be planted in London. We did that last year—5,000 trees.

All of this is because of our support, not just for a single thing in our economy, not to one area of our economy; we have to make it balanced. That's one of the great things about the budget: This budget talks about the whole element of our society, the whole element of our daily life. It's important, when we deal with a certain issue, that we have to remember others, because all get together and create the wave for growth and economic prosperity.

We didn't forget, in this budget, to invest more money in the environment and also to invest in clean energy. We in Ontario at the present time are the leaders in clean energy in Canada by supporting many different outlets: windmills or solar or bio-methane or this company trying to produce clean hydro. All these innovations and research will be supported by our government. We'll provide them with services they need, whatever possibility to link them with the grid. It's a great investment. It's a great way to attract more investment in this area, because we believe strongly in the environment and in ways to protect the environment.

We hosted a post-budget meeting in my riding of London with my colleagues Deb Matthews and Chris Bentley. We held a session with the social activists: the people who care about poor people, about the homeless, about legal aid, about women's issues, about mental issues, about many different elements. They all came to the breakfast and told us that it's the greatest budget that has ever happened in Ontario.

This budget is truly a Liberal budget. Liberals talk to the people—all classes, all the sectors of our people. In the past, people got used to seeing a budget—just talk to people who have money, people who influence the government. But this budget talked to all the sectors of our social mosaic in Ontario. It talks about everything: about education, health care, housing, seniors, small communities, large communities, cities, transit, transportation. It talks about everything. This budget is great.

And with all the spending in the budget, we also balanced the books. A few minutes ago, the member was talking about spending and how Liberals like to spend like crazy. But I want to tell them that they are the Conservatives. They think they are conservatives in terms of spending, but when they were the government, a \$5.6-billion deficit. What kind of fiscal balance did they have? And prior to the \$5.6-billion deficit, they used to balance the books by selling assets of the government, from the 407 to crown land—many different assets. Now they get lessons from our great Minister of Finance on how to balance the books and continue spending to support our public education, our public health care and our public infrastructure—

Interjection: The economy.

Mr. Ramal: —and also the economy. We created more than 327,000 net jobs. I know the member from Hamilton East was saying that we lost 125,000 jobs. It's a norm of life, of the economic cycle: sometimes we lose, sometimes we gain. But overall we've gained 327,000 net new jobs because of our public education, because of our public health care. We strongly believe that by supporting any company coming to Ontario, providing them with good service, with roads they need to be able to commute fast and quick, to connect them with the United States, to eastern Ontario, to northern Ontario to southern Ontario—this is our commitment. That's why we are attracting great investment. We believe in a strong economy in order to generate more taxes. The only way to generate more taxes is to support our public infrastructure, to support—

Mr. McMeekin: You can't do child care without money.

Mr. Ramal: One hundred per cent: You cannot do child care without money. You cannot support public education without money. You cannot support hospitals without money. You have to invest to get more investment.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Investment in people.

Mr. Ramal: Invest in people, and do you know what? It will pay you back in the future.

Interjection.

Mr. Ramal: My colleague from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot is talking about investment in people. It's a very important issue. If you invest in people, people will believe in you and pay you back in the future and keep that investment growing and growing by—

Mr. McMeekin: Investing in kids.

Mr. Ramal: Investing in kids, investing in families. The only way we will have a strong province and a strong community is with strong people, right? It's all about community.

Mr. McMeekin: Strong people build strong communities.

Mr. Ramal: Strong people build strong communities and a strong province. It's the only way we can continue.

I think we have a great budget. I hope that in the end the Conservatives and the NDP will see the light and are convinced, for the sake of the people of Ontario, to support it.

I would like to talk more about the good things in the budget, but I think my time is almost over. In the end, I wish that all the people in this House—all the Conservatives and the NDP—see the light and support the budget, because it's good for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 10 of the clock Thursday morning, April 5.

The House adjourned at 2127.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Whitby–Ajax	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
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Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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No. 153

N° 153

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 5 April 2007

Jeudi 5 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 5 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 5 avril 2007

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

WEARING OF FLOWERS

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent for members to be able to wear this beautiful tulip, which is to promote awareness of Parkinson's disease in the month of April.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is there consent? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT (DIRECT ELECTION OF DURHAM REGIONAL COUNCIL CHAIR), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS (ÉLECTION AU SCRUTIN GÉNÉRAL DU PRÉSIDENT DU CONSEIL RÉGIONAL DE DURHAM)

Mr. Ouellette moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide for the direct election of the Durham Regional Council chair / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités pour prévoir l'élection au scrutin général du président du conseil régional de Durham.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Ouellette, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): The region of Durham is growing at an astounding rate. In fact, it's recognized as one of the fastest growth areas in the country. Oshawa and Durham region have also experienced unprecedented economic growth and prosperity in recent years, and that's never been more evident than the drive in this morning. It was three times as long as it normally takes. Oshawa is listed as one of the highest-growth communities up to 2009, maybe to 2012, with all the growth and development going on there.

The regional government provides many essential services for the people. The regional chair position now

oversees over 600,000 constituents—a very important position indeed. Now it's time to have a chair who is directly elected by the people he or she serves.

On November 13 of last year, in the municipal elections, the residents of Oshawa, Ajax and Pickering were asked if they supported the direct election of the regional chair, and the results were overwhelming. In Ajax, the support for a directly elected regional chair was 89.39%; in Pickering, the support for a directly elected regional chair was 89.24%; and in my riding of Oshawa, the support was 86.31%. On February 14, 2007, Durham regional council endorsed the resolution.

I must say that I've been very impressed and actually overwhelmed with the support that I have seen in response to the introduction of this bill. I can't get over the number of phone calls, e-mails and correspondence, all complimenting this bill and the importance of democracy at the local and regional levels. As a matter of fact, I will give some examples from the local weekly paper, Oshawa This Week: "Electorate Says Yes to Voting for Regional Chairperson"; "Region Endorses Bill Calling For Direct Election of Chairperson." Ajax mayor Steve Parish: "I hope this bill is supported by government and passed expediently." Oshawa mayor John Gray: "Mr. Ouellette is fulfilling the requests of the people of Oshawa." Ajax councillor Colleen Jordan: "It is time we start moving in the direction people ask us to." And our member from Durham, Mr. O'Toole: "I commend [Mr. Ouellette] for reintroducing this bill, as it reflects the wishes of the people of the regional municipality of Durham."

I think the important point here is that this is why I previously introduced the bill; that is, this bill is what the people of Oshawa and the region of Durham have requested and voted for. They want more democracy in our area and they expect the government to support their wishes.

I know some concerns have been brought forward—I met with the minister briefly yesterday and we discussed this—that we may hear this morning regarding the cost of implementing a direct election. Well, the evidence is clear that in other, similar jurisdictions they have moved forward with a direct election for the regional chair and the cost concerns have not been validated.

I would like to share some of the information on similar experiences from the region of Halton and the region of Waterloo, two regions which are very similar in size and population to Durham region and which now have an elected chairperson. The evidence from these jurisdictions is interesting, but not quite surprising.

General observations from these regions show that voters are now accustomed to and pleased with having a directly elected regional chair, and voter turnout is consistent with other municipal elections.

There is no indication that a party apparatus backs or assists any candidate. There is no evidence that candidates cannot campaign effectively. The incumbent advantage is no different than in any other election. There is no apparent advantage to candidates from larger municipalities within the region. In fact, the chair of Waterloo region is actually from a township and not from the larger municipalities of Kitchener, Waterloo or Cambridge. The residents feel the elected chairperson best represents the entire region. The residents believe that the direct election results in a chair that is more powerful and, quite frankly, more accountable.

If you look at some of the stats from Waterloo, for example, the chair was first elected in 1997 and the voter turnout was very consistent with other municipalities in similar situations. The highest-spending candidate in the previous election—they have the stats for 2003; as 2006 was just finished, they don't have those returns completely compiled yet. In 2003, the chair for the region of Waterloo spent a total of \$25,883 to get elected, a considerable amount less than what the average member in this chamber would spend. Not only that, but in Halton, where the chair was first elected in 2000, the chair spent a total of \$40,388.22 in order to get elected.

As well, I would read a number of pieces of information from, for example, the town of Ajax. This is re Bill 172, direct election of regional council chair. It's to the Honourable John Gerretsen, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

1010

"Dear Sir:

"Please be advised that the following resolution was endorsed by Ajax town council at its meeting held on January 22, 2007:

"That the government of Ontario be urged to approve Bill 172, the Municipal Amendment Act (Direct Election of Durham Regional Council Chair), 2006, without delay;" and it goes on.

Not only that, when you look at what took place at Durham region council—this is a letter to the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, the Premier of Ontario:

"Honourable Sir, at their meeting held on February 14, 2007, the council of the regional municipality of Durham endorsed the following resolution:

"Whereas the" chairperson "of the regional municipality of Durham has considerable responsibility, influence and authority over numerous public policy and service issues affecting all residents, businesses and electors in the region of Durham;

"And whereas a fundamental principle of democracy is that the electors, through a general vote, have the right to freely choose their political representatives;

"And whereas an identical question was placed on the Ajax, Oshawa and Pickering municipal election ballots asking electors if they wished their local councils to

approve a resolution to request that the government of Ontario make a regulation requiring that the method of selecting the chair of the regional municipality of Durham be changed to election by general vote;

"And whereas electors responded to the ballot question as follows"—and it goes on to list:

—Ajax: Yes, 89.39%; No, 10.61%.

—Pickering: Yes, 89.24%; No, 10.76%.

—Oshawa: Yes, 86.31%; No, 13.69%.

"And whereas the ballot question results, while not legally binding as 50% of the ... electors in any of the municipalities did not vote on the question, indicate significant support for changing the method of selecting the regional chair to election by general vote;

"And whereas Bill 172, Municipal Amendment Act (Direct Election of Durham Regional Council Chair), 2006, which would require that the head of council for the regional municipality of Durham be elected by a general vote, received first reading by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on December 12, 2006;

"Now therefore be it resolved:"—remember, this is to the Premier from the council of Durham region—"That the council of the regional municipality of Durham endorse Bill 172, Municipal Amendment Act (Direct Election of Durham Regional Council Chair), 2006, and that the government of Ontario be urged to pass this act and provide royal assent without delay."

It's quite clear, when you receive information such as this, when you see the votes coming in on the municipal ballots saying that over 86% and 89% in Ajax in Pickering want it, that those areas specifically want this to move forward.

Some of the difficulties: We heard or we thought that if it was directly elected, the larger municipalities would control what takes place. However, that's quite contrary to what has been shown in the region of Waterloo: It was from a township that an individual has been elected as chair. So quite clearly, the concerns brought forward by some of the municipalities in the region—and yes, there are pros and cons for everyone. I know some of my colleagues will expressly bring out some of those pros and cons, especially my seatmate, who is the former chair from the region of Halton and will discuss some of the actual financials, possibly, some of the levy costs and the overall implications of directly electing a regional chair.

The evidence is clear that the region of Durham is now ready to move forward with the direct election of the regional chair. I would ask all members for their support and consideration on this day.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I rise to support this particular motion. I rise to support it not only because the people in Durham have spoken very strongly through the ballot box that they want this but also because I think that the whole way in which regional governments have been structured in the past is arcane. It's of another era. It's of a time when the province would meddle in the affairs of the municipalities, which hopefully is coming to an end.

I remember and we all remember the time when the province had a say in who was going to be the regional chair, and that the regional chair was not even an elected person. In many of the regional governments across Ontario today, they are not elected. They do not seek office. What they do is seek the support of those who have been elected to office. They make deals with politicians and they make deals in order to get elected. It's done in a closed group, and the public has very little or no say in how it is done.

I support what the member for Oshawa is trying to do, but I think it isn't going far enough. I'm going to vote for it. But what is good for Durham should be good for all the other regional governments in Ontario, for all those places that do not have one-tier governments like Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa or London. All of those places that have a two-tier government should have the same opportunities. We've seen what happened in Halton. We have a member today, the member for Burlington, who was the first regional chair of that municipality and who was directly elected. It seemed to me that she did a pretty good job. I think she was elected and re-elected again until she determined that the time was up and she wanted to move on and come here.

The whole issue of having non-elected people in charge I think would rankle any true democrat. It would rankle anyone who thought that this was the way to go. Therefore, because the people have spoken so strongly, there should be no doubt in anyone's mind that we give them what they want. Because the municipal politicians have backed that up, there can be no excuse, which I have heard from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing from time to time, that he's not going to take action on referenda because the local municipality doesn't agree with the people. That's the case in the city of Kawartha Lakes, and that's the rationale he has given for not doing it. But he cannot have a similar rationale here, because not only do the people want to change the system but the politicians want to change it too, and there should be absolutely no hindrance in getting that done.

There was one question raised by my friend from Oshawa that is related to the cost. I'm not sure within the body of his bill when he intends this to happen, if it's right away and to go out for a brand new election, or whether he wants this to happen in the elections in 2010.

Mr. Ouellette: Next election.

Mr. Prue: It's 2010. If it's in 2010, I want to tell you that the cost will be so minimal to the municipality. There are already poll clerks, there are already ballot boxes, there are already electoral places that will be determined to house the poll clerks and the ballot boxes. The cost of putting an additional couple of names on a ballot will be minuscule.

Just to close, I think this is an idea whose time has come for the people of Durham. I would implore the government to look at this, and if you're going to do it for Durham, think about all the other municipalities. Think about Peel, about York region, about all the other places that have regional governments with appointed

chairs. This harkens back to a day which has long passed. If the government is true to its word, and I have heard many members on the government side speak to this and say that they believe municipalities are mature levels of government, then they also have to believe that the municipal electors are mature levels of electors and have the confidence and the good sense to choose in their minds who is best for them and not to leave it up to a municipal council to appoint someone who does not even seek elected office.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm delighted to join in this debate. I want to begin by stating that I do have a lot of respect for the member for Oshawa. He is a hard-working MPP, and he's also a fellow hockey coach. For anybody here who thinks that it's tough to be a politician and you take a lot of abuse, try being a hockey coach. It's a heck of a lot tougher than the job we have to go through year in and year out. I know the member for Oshawa is an excellent hockey coach because he happens to coach my constituency assistant Monica's son, David McGee. I've heard nothing but good things, and when you hear good things from a hockey parent about a hockey coach, it means he must be pretty darn good. So I congratulate him for that. I tell him I have a lot of respect for him for that.

Unfortunately, I'm not going to be able to support his resolution today, and let me explain why. You see, our government believes that the best solutions in municipal governance are those that are developed at the local level and supported locally. While I know and I recognize that there is what seems to be a building consensus for direct election of the regional chair throughout the region of Durham, there's still a process in place whereby municipal representatives and the public can bring forward this change. I really don't feel comfortable usurping that process to sort of dictate from here what we think is best rather than allowing the municipal politicians to participate in what I think is a very legitimate and proper process for them to go through.

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Let me just outline what the process is. It sounds complicated but it's really quite simple. Regional council would have to pass a resolution requesting that the minister pass a regulation under something called subsection 218, regional powers—not very difficult for them to do. It sounds like there may be a consensus at the region that may allow them to do that. Notice of this and the holding of a public meeting would be necessary. I think that's important. The public should have an opportunity to speak to this.

A bylaw would be passed by the regional council and circulated to lower-tier municipalities for endorsement. Councils of lower-tier municipalities would then vote on the upper-tier bylaw, and the bylaw would have to be passed by a majority of lower-tier councils representing the majority of the public by the population.

I don't think it's that difficult to get that kind of consensus. When you do make a change in terms of structure of governance, it's important that you do have a con-

sensus. There is not a full consensus out there right now, and that's one of the concerns we have. The community of Clarington, for instance, is on record as being opposed to this. We don't think their views should be totally ignored. This could still go forward under this structure without Clarington's support, but we think their voice should be heard.

In addition, the representatives from the township of Brock, the municipality of Clarington, the township of Scugog, the town of Whitby and the township of Uxbridge voted against the resolution at regional council. So I am not sure whether the consensus is as strong as we are being told today. It may well be, but if it is, there is a very fine way for the municipality to bring this forward.

I don't want to get too political here, but our approach to municipalities is that we have confidence in municipal leaders to be able to carry out their responsibilities. That's why, under the new Municipal Act and the new City of Toronto Act, we have given them more authority and more autonomy. We have confidence in their ability to do this. This is an approach that's directly different from the approach taken by the previous Tory government, which felt they had to—I don't want to use the word "dictate," but it's probably appropriate in this circumstance—dictate to municipalities when they thought, "You should amalgamate." For instance, in the city of Toronto, where 73% of the people didn't want to do it and despite the fact that there was almost unanimous consent—almost unanimous, not entirely—from local representatives not to do it, they thought, "The province knows best; let's impose this."

My concern is that this is a similar approach, and I think it demonstrates the differences in the approach taken by the different governments. The McGuinty government looks for a consensual approach: "Allow municipalities to do what they're entitled to do and use their autonomy. We have confidence they will do that appropriately."

We are not going to impose a solution on them here, even though most of us on this side of the House probably agree that direct election of a chair makes sense. There are a lot of good reasons to do that. We just don't feel we are in a position where we want to impose that. We want municipalities to go through the proper process and develop the consensus they need with their people, with upper and lower tiers. We think that's the more appropriate way to go, and as a result we won't—I won't—be supporting and I won't be recommending that members of the Legislature support this particular resolution.

Well-intended as I think it is, we think it just runs contrary, going through and imposing our view at Queen's Park on the people of Durham. It's not the appropriate way to go.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): I'm pleased to rise and support my colleague from Oshawa on his private member's bill. I speak from personal experience, having been elected twice as a regional chair in Halton. Just from a personal point of view, I can tell you that

there is no more honour or pride than in having the trust of the people shown to you in a public vote. It was a really good feeling in 2000, when council requested of the provincial government of the day to have the regional chair of Halton directly elected.

The first direct election of the regional chair was in 2000, and I guess because it was the first time, many of us wondered how, physically, this would be carried out in a large area that spanned four provincial ridings. But, quite frankly, it's what the people wanted and it was something they accepted and took great pleasure participating in.

I asked council to make this request of the provincial government because it was at a time when services and financial responsibilities were being transferred to the regions, whereas previous to that the regions were collecting about 14 cents of every property tax dollar. When the transfer of services and financial responsibilities occurred, we were collecting much more than that. It actually turned about, and the local area municipalities were collecting about 14 cents or 15 cents of every dollar, school boards were collecting about 14 cents or 15 cents of every dollar and the region was collecting about 70 cents of every property tax dollar. I felt it was critical that the head of council be directly accountable to the people, based on the amount of money that that particular level of government collected in taxes.

Overriding, for me, was the accountability directly back to the people whose services you were providing, whose money you were collecting, whose advice you needed to take and whom you needed to report back to. It needed to be a direct relationship, not a relationship through members of council who were elected. That indirect relationship was a broken line for me. It also speaks to democracy. My family came to Canada in 1953, and we lived in refugee camps. I know what democracy feels like. Democracy is being in Canada; democracy is being in Ontario: having the ability to speak out and say what you would like, and most especially having the right to vote for the people who represent you. So democracy for me was a big part of why the regional chair in any municipality should be directly elected.

Appointed by council, as I said, is that broken line that occurs and it's that disconnect with the people. Even though your style may be to connect directly with people, you still don't have that same accountability that you do when you're directly elected by the people. You all know how that feels, because we're all directly elected to this Legislature. It's a good feeling. It's a strong feeling. It gives you a confident feeling that you're representing the people.

Being an appointed chair, to me, resembles the appointed bodies that occur from time to time, and I am not a proponent of special-purpose bodies. I never have been. The more that are created, I think the more problems that occur. Decent people serve on appointed boards, well-meaning people serve on appointed boards, but when it comes down to it, they are not accountable directly back

to the people. MPAC, OLG, CCACs, LHINs—these are well-meaning people that run these arms-length, autonomous corporations, but do you know what? People can't reach the people making the decisions, and I don't think that's right in a democracy.

In a government that delivers the critical services in a municipality, if the federal government were gone tomorrow, we wouldn't know for a year. If we were gone tomorrow, you wouldn't know for months. If the local level of government were gone, you would know the instant you tried to turn on your tap, you tried to turn on your lights, you wanted an ambulance, you called for a fire engine or you called for a police car. It is the level of government that touches the people closely, directly and instantly. The person that heads that council should be directly accountable to the people.

The critical services that are delivered come with a high cost and in large part are invisible services, so you don't know about regional government as quickly as you might know about your local government that runs the buses on the streets, that has the parks that your children play in, that floods the ice rinks that your children play in and that has the libraries. Those are visible things in the community. But your regional government presents a product to the people that, for the most part, is invisible.

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When you turn your water on in a regional municipality, you don't think about who is responsible for that service. You don't even think about whether your water is clean and safe; it just happens. That invisibility of regional government is, I think, something that needs to be changed. One way to do it is to create the direct election of the regional chair, because then that person goes out into the community and the community becomes aware of who that person represents.

If you think about it, in councils where regional councillors are indirectly elected to the region—for example, in Burlington they are elected as Burlington councillors and then appointed to the region—most councillors don't run on regional issues. Most councillors run on issues very local to them: on parks and recreation and libraries and that kind of thing. Those larger issues are never profiled. But the regional chairman is the only person in a regional council that represents the entire region. If that person is elected, he or she is accountable to that entire region.

These are the critical services that are provided in a community. Let me tell you folks that since the realignment of services occurred in the late 1990s, regional budgets are very large, topping over half a billion dollars and more in the larger regions. This is a lot of money for councillors to be handling, but the head of council ought to be accountable directly back to the people for that large amount of money that's collected and overseen.

It's not a difficult campaign, because when you're campaigning in a local municipality the issues don't really vary much from municipality to municipality on a regional basis. The geography is larger; no question. But it is not a difficult campaign, and I speak to that from personal experience.

I feel that the pros far outweigh the cons. I've told you about why I feel it's important that the mandate to represent the entire region and to be accountable is the overriding issue for me. It's about democracy. It's about being in the new millennium, being a sophisticated municipality where the people have the right to say who they want as the head of their council.

I will say, though, that there are a couple of issues that are—what can I call it?—less than advantageous in a process like this. One of them is that if the municipality chose—I haven't seen this happen in any area where a regional chair is directly elected—party politics could creep in. I'm not a believer that party politics belongs at the municipal level; it does not. You see it in some of the very large municipalities and, quite frankly, it does not work. That is one opportunity that I think would be a disadvantage. The other thing is that name recognition sometimes can override the ability of the person to actually carry out the job. That could be a disadvantage to the municipality. But I think that, given what I know from experience, the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I will be supporting this bill that the member from Oshawa has presented. I agree with many of the arguments presented by the member from Oshawa, including the arguments presented by the member from Burlington, except the last comment, and I'll get to that in a second.

The member from Scarborough Centre raises an interesting point—and the only point that he said that he will be voting against—and that is the principle of consensus and that they have the power, as a regional council, to be able to, on a consensus basis, simply come to terms with this issue. It seems like a very reasonable argument. On the face of it, it sounds as if it would be very difficult to say, "How could you disagree with the notion of consensus?" It seems so friendly; it seems so nice; it seems like the way to do things, except, if we did things by consensus nothing would ever happen, by and large, because you're always going to have one person saying no, for whatever reason. In this case, one little town might decide, for whatever reason, "No, we just don't like it." If you left it to the principle of consensus, no change would happen. So, should the notion and/or the principle of consensus override the principle of direct accountability and the principle of transparency? I say no to that argument. I think direct accountability should override consensus in this regard. I think transparency is a much better principle to speak about and to support rather than the issue of consensus in this case.

When you run for a regional council chair, you are running on a platform that is clear and transparent to the public. You are forced to put out a platform. As the member from Burlington said, you would be running on regional issues, not local issues, so when you run, everyone in every region would know what ideas you are advocating for and on that basis people will support you or reject you. How could we oppose the idea of direct election? It's hard for me to say I would oppose that. I

like direct election. I like the idea that people have a platform and that I know what he or she stands for. On that basis, I either vote for them or I don't vote for them.

I understand the fears; I do. I appreciate the fact that some of the towns in that region would be very worried about losing their possible autonomy or their smallness and that they might be swallowed up by the big ones. It's a possible, legitimate fear. But I'm not sure that that fear is greater if you have a direct election versus the fear that you might have now at the present time in a non-direct election. I think the fears are equally true whether you elect somebody directly or not. So while I understand that there may be fears, the principle of direct election should override that fear.

I don't think cost is an issue. My colleague from Beaches–East York said there isn't much of a cost issue, the member from Burlington said as much, and the member from Oshawa. I don't think that's an issue, and I'm not sure that we're going to get too many arguments connected to the issue of cost.

I wanted to remind the member from Oshawa that I will be supporting it, in spite of the fact that your leader, Harris, at the time, you'll recall, when he amalgamated the city of Toronto, did so in spite of the fact that over 80% of the public that was consulted in a referendum said no to amalgamation. We should remember that because I was supportive of the people who, in a referendum, said we shouldn't amalgamate, in the same way that I'm leaning to support your argument that a lot of the people where there has been a referendum are leaning heavily towards having direct elections. We have to be very supportive of those kinds of initiatives. I'm convinced that the member from Oshawa remembers this very well and is likely not to ever repeat that mistake, in the same way that the NDP was in government then and made a few mistakes and is likely not to repeat the very same ones. It's true that you might commit others, as we might, should we ever get into government, but I think we are not likely to repeat the same ones.

The member from Burlington raised another fear, and that is the fear of party politics at the municipal level. I have never been frightened of party politics at the municipal level. In fact, I believe the majority of people know which party we belong to. I am convinced that the good folks who elected the member from Burlington knew then that she was probably a Conservative Party member and/or a Conservative Party supporter or a member who has Conservative politics. I am convinced that people know us, in the same way that if I did not reveal my leanings when I was a school trustee, in the way that I spoke, in the motions that I supported, people would say, "He looks and sounds like a New Democrat." So what separates us from saying, "I am a New Democrat and vote as a New Democrat, but I do not reveal myself as New Democrat"? The point is, we reveal ourselves in the way we speak and the way that we vote, and people know that. So hiding your politics is subterfuge, really.

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I'm not sure that we would making politics at the municipal level worse if all of a sudden people said, "I'm

a Tory," and others, "I'm a Liberal," and others, "I'm a New Democrat." We have it now, except there is no label at the moment.

But all I say to people is: Look at the voting record in all of the regional council debates, all of the city debates, town debates; look at the voting patterns of individual members and you can pretty well have a good sense, "This person is a Tory; this person is in the middle, always a Liberal; and this person is a New Democrat"—usually a New Democrat on the left. There are times when some Liberals go to the right and some Liberals go to the left. This is equally true, but on the whole, people know, based on their voting pattern.

The main thrust of my argument is that direct accountability is something we should all be supporting. People have a right to know who is going to be their regional chair where we have regional governments; and to go further, as my friend from Beaches–East York said, where we have regional governments, the government should move quickly to direct elections. It shouldn't be just as it relates to this Bill 172; it should be with all regional governments across Ontario.

I think it's good bill. It's a bill that I will be supporting and many of the members of the New Democrat Party are likely to support. We will see whether other Liberal members have a different point of view than the one raised by the member of Oshawa.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): I rise to speak on Bill 172 as presented by the member from Oshawa. I have to say that I pay respect to the member from Oshawa that he is trying to move forward the business of his city of Oshawa. But the member mentioned several things that I am concerned about. I cannot support this bill in its present form because the member seems to go through the statistics that the city of Oshawa and the town of Ajax moved resolutions to support this bill. Also, there was a question on the ballot in Ajax, Pickering and Oshawa and there was overwhelming support for this particular bill. He mentioned the percentages, but I tend to look at the numbers. He mentioned that there are approximately 600,000 people in the region of Durham. When I look at the numbers of people who actually voted yes, it's only 48,892. I would calculate that to be less than 10% of the population of the region. Ten per cent, to me, is not an overwhelming majority and it does not tell me that the people of the region have spoken strongly. Even if I were to take that and further break it down by individual cities, it probably would show a whole different picture altogether.

I have to say that our government has been working very hard to build a relationship with municipalities over the last three years. There has been a lot of good bridge-building, if I can say, within the last three years. I would have to say that I'd respect the municipality's wishes. If the municipality wanted this to happen, we have legislation today that allows it to happen. If the region of Durham has debated their resolution to support Bill 172 and actually advised the government that they support Bill 172, I would find it overwhelming to support this bill

if the region had also followed the process in the Municipal Act, which is clearly stated in section 218. Let me just clarify why it concerns me that we are not following section 218. If you read the details of section 218, the regional council has to pass a resolution requesting the minister to change regulations. But one specific part of section 218 reads: "Bylaw passed if the majority of lower-tier councils representing a majority of the upper-tier electors endorse the bylaw." There's a specific reason for that in the act today, because what it does is provide fairness for the minority partners of a regional municipality. It allows the minority partners to have some type of fairness before something happens that affects the smaller group or the minority people in that particular region. This particular bill, I do not believe, respects the wishes of the minority regions because it's really looking after what Ajax, Pickering and Oshawa want and it's ignoring the other smaller municipalities.

I pulled down from the Internet the vote of the regional council of Durham when they debated Bill 172 and it's interesting to note that the mayor of Pickering voted no, although his people want it. So you have to ask yourself, "What is the problem here?" Well, obviously there isn't consensus. The whole Municipal Act is designed in such a way that you have some form of consensus or agreement by the general public and the majority of the people who are around.

This particular bill reminds me of what happened in Toronto. I was a member of the city of Scarborough council at the time. I will tell you, it will come across, if we accept this bill and support it, that the province is meddling in the municipal world again. To me, I can't support that. There are many pitfalls with what happened in Toronto and, no matter what, the government will not be looked upon positively if we impose this bill on the region of Durham. So I cannot support it.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's interesting that the Liberals aren't supporting this bill, because it deals with the electoral process and it deals with a lot of the same things that are happening with the parliamentary reform committee and how that's operating in Ontario. It's interesting how that's operating in that 103 members, who were unelected—in fact, were unknown by the constituents that they represent—were brought together to talk about changing the way in which we elect members to this House. Here we are discussing how—or will be discussing in the bill—those people are going to be elected to this House, and we have no idea who the 103 people were who came together and created this system. They were totally unelected. There was no review. There was no peer review, certainly, as to who they were. They came together and created a system, which they refer to as MMP, I think it is, that is going to change, or could possibly change, the way in which the Ontario government is run.

The Liberals have supported this bill and they're bringing in this new system which could very well change the way Ontario is governed. So it's not surprising that we stand here today and listen to the Liberal

Party and they're totally against, or not in favour of, having the due process of democracy take place, and the chairman of a major region with a population that is greater than one province and perhaps two or three provinces—it certainly is a very large area that they are representing—isn't elected. There seems to be a theme that runs through it.

Not only that, we stand in our place here and talk, and I know that, whenever I talk about things, I'm hopefully well briefed on it and somewhat knowledgeable on the things I talk about. I sometimes wonder about other members of this House as to whether they have that same degree of knowledge as to what they talk about. I'm certainly not talking about the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who is always well briefed, but he was looking at me rather surprised when I mentioned that.

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But today we have someone in the House who has actually gone through the process that we're talking about going through in the former chairman of the region of Halton, Joyce Savoline, who went through the process of becoming an elected chair, of representing the people. She stood in her place today and told of her experience. So we have this first-hand knowledge. First-hand knowledge in this place is always fairly rare. I think even the Minister of Municipal Affairs would agree that it's fairly rare to have that first-hand knowledge and experience when we're discussing a particular bill.

It was interesting to listen to her account of how it felt when you're on one side of the equation and how differently it felt when you were on the other side of the equation and how much better it is when the people whom you are representing actually elect you to office in that you have that feeling of representing those people in a very real sense. So we're fortunate today to have this. I'm surprised, quite frankly, that the Liberals aren't understanding this aspect of it. They're getting this first-hand experience. I'm surprised they're not a little more open-minded on this particular subject. But then, I guess when we consider the direction the reorganization of the political process in the province of Ontario might be taking, in that we may move to a mixed-member proportional representative system where up to 30 seats in this House, in this Legislature, wouldn't be elected at all—they would have no responsibility to an individual group of electors; they would be elected off a list—this is something that is so undemocratic. To be elected off a list means that you would have absolutely no responsibility to the people of Ontario. You would only have responsibility to the people who made up the list: the party bosses. Boy, if we need less influence by party bosses anywhere in this province, it would certainly be in this Legislature.

Interjections.

Mr. Chudleigh: I'm getting lots of advice from members across the hall, but I suspect when the time comes, we will see them stand and vote the wrong way on this bill.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I wasn't expecting necessarily to speak to this bill but certainly

will take the couple of minutes that were left over after my colleague and friend from the riding of Trinity-Spadina made his remarks, as well as my friend from Beaches-East York. I would have to say that I stand firmly with them in support of this particular bill.

Certainly, when I was on regional government, in my first opportunity to be elected in my community there was direct election of a regional chair and I think, frankly, which was the best way for people to hold to account elected officials. It's the best way for people to be able to determine whether or not the performance of that person met the standard that they had hoped, that that person was performing their duties in an appropriate way and that judgment came on election day at the municipal level, when people could vote for the person who was running for regional chair and determine whether the person who had that position was doing a good job or not.

There are certainly other ways that you can express your feelings or your concerns about the performance of your elected officials during their term of office, and I would certainly encourage anyone watching here today to do that on a regular basis and not just wait until the next election. I can recall that always being said when I was on council in the city of Hamilton: "We don't have too many public meetings and we don't need to have public input because the public input comes on election day." I don't think that I necessarily agree with that; in fact, I know that I don't. I think getting public input and getting the community to be involved in decision-making is important. However, ultimately, direct election of the regional chair is important, and that's why I support this bill.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's a pleasure to join this debate this morning. I want to congratulate the member from Oshawa for bringing this forward. I was part of a government that was two-tier prior to this, and I know the frustration one goes through on that upper level. In my case, it was a county. We had a warden who was chosen amongst the mayors of each municipality. In a majority of times, things worked out just fine, but sometimes there were some challenges; let's put it this way. And not once or twice; I'll be very clear.

The problem that I have with this—the cost and the accountability and all of that stuff, I think, is all irrelevant when we talk about democracy at its best, with all fairness. Where I have a challenge with this—I wish the member would have broadened the scope of his bill so that it's not just for Durham. I think we should have talked about all two-tier municipalities, because I really believe that what's good for one should be good for the other. If we're going to treat Ontarians the same, every Ontarian needs the same respect. I believe in elections; I believe in democracy. That's what put us here, and we should all be proud of that. My challenge is when this level of government goes down to its siblings and puts handcuffs on them, telling them, "This is what you must do." That's what I have a problem with, in all fairness. So if we are going to change laws, I think the law should

respect every municipality and every community the same.

In the county that I come from, in 2002, we had some amalgamations. They were driven by the folks at those lower-tier municipalities; that's what they wanted to do. I must say, we went from 13 municipalities to seven, and they work very well. They were not imposed on us. We drove that piece, but we worked within the structure and the rules of the day.

I'm not sure how much more strongly I can express that I believe in democracy, in the election process. As much as sometimes we say, "Well, it's only 30% of the people who turn out and vote," we ought to congratulate those 30% because they believe in democracy, and I respect that. We need to look at ways to increase that.

My challenge here is that we're going to be circumventing the rules for one municipality when they don't have consensus. I have a resolution in front of me from Clarington that strongly opposes this. And there are other municipalities, probably smaller than Oshawa, probably smaller than Ajax. I guess maybe I have a soft spot for those municipalities because I come from a small municipality, and it's always afraid of Big Brother ruling the roost. That happened when we were going through amalgamation in the county of Northumberland to form a one-tier level of government. That's one of the things that the smaller municipalities were opposed to, and this is why the smaller municipalities got together, they amalgamated, and it worked very well.

So we have the process in place. I would encourage the folks from Durham to go through the process, to listen to what the people have to say, and proceed with that. If tomorrow we have another piece of legislation that deals comprehensively across the province on how we deal with two-tier municipalities, how we elect folks, I'd really like to get engaged in that debate and to pursue that piece, because I believe they should be elected. I make that very, very clear. My problem here is that we're using some powers of the province—and I don't want to get political either—that the previous government used, and I don't want to go down that road. I believe in decisions made on the ground. So I cannot support this the way it is, but I do believe in the process.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Ouellette, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ouellette: I appreciate the comments from the members for Beaches-East York, Scarborough Centre, Burlington, Trinity-Spadina, Scarborough-Rouge River, Halton, Hamilton East and Northumberland. I'm going to try, in the time I have, to speak about a couple of issues.

First of all, Beaches-East York: Yes, the intention would be to move forward in 2010, during the next full election.

I should also mention that the member from Erie-Lincoln has brought a bill in to address the same issue in the region of Niagara. He has had similar difficulties as I did, being stuck on the 401 trying to get here.

1100

Now, a couple of things. I think we'll start where we finished off, with the member from Northumberland.

You talk about the difficulties in possibly the smaller municipalities being taken over, yet you also stated that you went from 12 to seven and didn't have any problems and it worked well. Going to a committee process and having a committee look at this bill at least would explore those opportunities, so if there's future potential for our doing it province-wide—and, quite frankly, the reason I didn't go province-wide is because I represent Oshawa. I had the stats and the figures from Oshawa and the comparators with Halton and Waterloo to bring forward today. Through the committee process, we can certainly address those issues and talk about that and, quite frankly, your municipality would be given the opportunity at that time to discuss the pros and cons of it.

Now, if we move backwards as well and speak to the issues brought forward by the member from Scarborough—Rouge River, the member stated that the mayor from Pickering voted against it. Well, some of the difficulties there in his comments were saying that the minority is making the decision there. It's now the minority that's making the decision, and it's democracy. We're trying to move forward.

In closing, in the few seconds I have left, I'm just going to say what the region of Durham resolution was: "That the council of the regional municipality of Durham endorse Bill 172, the Municipal Amendment Act (Direct Election of Durham Regional Council Chair), 2006, and that the government of Ontario be urged to pass this act and provide royal assent without delay."

VISITORS

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wish to inform this House that a private school from the riding of Thornhill is in attendance here today. I wish to welcome the students from As-Sadiq Islamic School.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That's not a point of order, but they are welcome.

WAR OF 1812

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should establish an independent commission to devise and carry out a plan for the commemoration of the bicentennial of the War of 1812; that this commission should include among its members representatives of groups dedicated to the preservation of Canada's military history and heritage as well as representatives of Ontario communities that are the sites of battles or other significant events of the war; and that the government of Ontario should work with the government of Canada and other governments to commemorate the War of 1812 during its bicentennial and afterwards as an important tourism and educational experience.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Munro has moved private member's notice of motion number 50.

Pursuant to standing order 96, Mrs. Munro, you have up to 10 minutes, and the floor is yours.

Mrs. Munro: Before I begin my formal remarks, I would like to welcome and recognize Rob Levery, who is in the gallery here representing the Ontario Historical Association, and, in the gallery above, John Adams and Joe Gill, from Friends of Fort York. I want to welcome them and appreciate their support.

Just a few days from today, Canadians will gather together to remember with pride and sorrow the battle of Vimy Ridge. Ninety years have passed since this great and terrible battle, which many see as the birth of Canada as a fully independent nation. Our ancestors of 90 years ago would themselves have looked back to the battles of the War of 1812 as events that helped create the Canada they knew. The Canadians who fought in the battles of the War of 1812 laid the path for the nation that would send its troops to Vimy and for the nation we live in today.

Why is it important for us to remember the War of 1812? It is important because if the people of this province had not taken a stand to defend their freedoms, neither our province nor our country would exist. The actions of our ancestors in the war remind us that preserving freedom means we must sometimes risk our lives. Canadians know this in Afghanistan, they knew it in Korea, and they knew it in two world wars. They first learned it in the War of 1812.

My resolution proposes to establish an independent commission that includes amongst its members experts on the war and representatives of those communities most affected by the war. I want to see this commission working with the federal government and other provincial governments, as well as the US federal and state governments. In my consultations, I have received unanimously positive support for the idea of this commemoration. Indeed, many of the volunteer groups that help preserve our forts and sites, as well as government agencies involved in heritage and tourism, are already planning for the bicentennial of the war. A provincial commission would help coordinate commemorative events and assist local volunteer groups and communities in their commemorations.

Another growing group that is very interested in the bicentennial are historical re-enactors who commemorate many of the historic regiments and events of the War of 1812 and the revolution. In the US, bills and resolutions to commemorate the war have already been introduced in Congress and many state legislatures. Americans may dispute who won the war, but there is no question the events such as the burning of Washington and the battle of New Orleans are important in American history. The Star-Spangled Banner originated in the war during the siege of Fort Mifflin in Philadelphia. In fact, the bombs bursting in the air of their anthem actually came from our ships.

The bicentennial provides a tremendous opportunity to educate our people about our history and to help them enjoy the tourist value of our heritage. Forts and battle-

fields and other sites are scattered throughout Ontario: from Crysler's farm near Morrisburg to the battle of the Thames in southwestern Ontario; from Nancy Island in Georgian Bay to the battle of York, and south to the forts and battlefields of Niagara. Defenders of Canada included British troops, local militia and Native forces, including those led by the great Tecumseh.

I know some of my colleagues will be speaking more about some of the important events that happened in their local areas. Sometimes when we think about battles taking place in Ontario, it's hard to really believe they took place in our province. Vimy or Juno Beach cost many Canadian lives, but they occurred far, far away. The battles of the War of 1812 happened only miles or, in the case of this House, blocks away.

Canadians see our nation as a land of peace, yet it is amazing how many of the turning points of our history took place during war. Ontario was founded by Loyalists fleeing the American Revolution. We stood together during the War of 1812. Our nation came of age in two world wars. Canadians have been tested many times in wars. I'm glad we did not fail.

The wars we have had to fight to preserve our freedom have made us well aware of what peace and freedom mean. One particular reason it is vital for this Legislature to commemorate the war is because of the events of April 1813. American forces landed at York on April 27 and defeated the British and militia forces. On April 29 and 30, they committed some of their greatest outrages, plundering empty homes, burning parts of Fort York, and the town and even stealing the mace from the Parliament buildings. The American commander did return some of the plunder, including some of the books stolen out of the public library. The mace you can see downstairs in the foyer today was only returned by order of President Roosevelt in 1934.

Perhaps the greatest outrage committed in York was the burning of Upper Canada's Parliament buildings, the meeting place of our predecessor assembly. As their successors, we have an obligation to remember the war—to remember that the elected assembly of our province was attacked and to remember how the war affected members of this House and, indeed, all of the people in Ontario.

1110

As members of this assembly, we can be proud that our predecessors continued to meet regularly during the war. We have no Hansard record from this time, but we do know the words the Lieutenant Governor spoke to the assembled members in his speech from the throne in 1814: "The valour of our soldiers and citizens has proved what can be effected in a good cause by men who have nothing in view but their own honour and their country's safety." As a member of this assembly, I can only express my greatest respect for our predecessors continuing to meet throughout the war, even after the Parliament buildings were burned and the war continued.

Not only the seat of government suffered; the war presented a great burden for most residents of Upper

Canada. In 1814, the Legislature, addressing itself directly to the Prince Regent on behalf of the King, stated, "The whole male population of Upper Canada able to bear arms does not exceed 10,000 men and it is scattered over a frontier of at least 800 miles in extent. Nearly one half of these were embodied for the last campaign." The war probably affected almost every family in Ontario, and in their address to the Prince Regent they told him, "Many of our militia men have fallen by the sword of the enemy, many have been disabled, and a large proportion of them have died from diseases contracted while in the field and from being destitute of every comfort. Our population has decreased, our properties have been destroyed, and hundreds are reduced to beggary and want without even the consolation of knowing that their exertions, their fidelity and their sufferings have been represented to the government and to the country for the maintenance of whose rights they have made such sacrifices and such exertions and to whose favourable notice they look forward as their greatest reward."

We must never forget that the war was not just a series of battles. It was a time of great suffering for many people in Upper Canada. Our ancestors defended their freedoms and their loyalty to crown and country, but many did so at a tremendous price. The war did not end in a victory for either side, yet the survival of a free British North America meant that half a century later there could be a free Canada. It meant 200 years of peace, a peace that leaves our country with no fear of beggary or want, living in peace and freedom. Our debt to the men and women who fought and survived the War of 1812 is immense, and we hold an obligation to remember them and their struggle.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): It gives me pleasure today to speak on this motion presented by the member from York North. Certainly I respect the member's interest and passion for history and heritage and culture. Long before I got to this Legislature, I knew of this member and I knew of her passion and interest, and I want to thank her for what she has done there.

I think it's important for me at this point to indicate to this House what has already been done by the Ministry of Tourism with regard to the opportunities that we will have in 2012 to celebrate the bicentennial of the War of 1812. As a ministry, and as the parliamentary assistant, I'm pleased to say that we have identified six key sites in this province where we are now in the process of organizing focus groups, and from those focus groups, local committees. Focus groups have already been established in St. Lawrence and the Thousand Islands, and that brings in the area I represent, my constituents of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. There are also focus groups in Windsor-Chatham, Georgian Bay and Sault Ste. Marie, and from these focus groups now we have local committees formed. These local committees have received small grants to assist them in the early works of

establishing what strategies will be put in place—a draft plan—and hopefully by the early part of this summer we will have some idea of what will happen, what will take place and what ideas will be formulated in these areas. I'm very happy to report that to this House.

Speaking on the motion this morning, I just want to say that throughout Ontario we have some great opportunities all along the St. Lawrence, around Lake Ontario and along the Niagara River. I taught school for 32½ years and had the opportunity to bring many students to heritage sites related to the War of 1812. I brought students to Fort Erie, down to Fort George in Niagara-on-the-Lake—certainly tramped many times around Queenston Heights and Brock's Monument—and to Fort York. I understand there are representatives here today from Fort York. I'm delighted to hear that. Year after year in my English class at Viscount Alexander school in Long Sault we studied Treason at York, by John Hayes, a very interesting historical novel.

I'm hoping that the opportunities we have as we lead up to 2012 and the bicentennial will give the drive to individuals to profile literature. For example, in my own local area, Dorothy Dumbille wrote *A Boy at Crysler's Farm*. The member from York North referred to Crysler's Farm in her opening remarks and in her presentation earlier today. That is a very pivotal battle in the War of 1812-14. It took place just as you head down the St. Lawrence River to where the Long Sault Rapids used to be. The Long Sault Rapids are no longer there. They were flooded in 1958 when we lost the six communities of the Lost Villages. Even the site of the battle of Crysler's Farm was flooded. But before it was flooded, earthmovers came in, scoured up the earth from the site and built a huge mound. Today the obelisk that was put up to commemorate that war sits on top of that mound of earth.

I think all that along the St. Lawrence, around Lake Ontario up to Erie and even into Quebec—the member commented that she wishes the federal government would get involved here, as do I, because this is really a national event. We have the battle of Chateaugay, in Quebec. We know that Montreal was quite involved, because it was the interest of the forces of Wilkinson, as he headed down the St. Lawrence to team up with the forces of Hampton as he went up through Lake Champlain, to take Montreal to cut off the supply and immigration routes up the St. Lawrence. These are the stories that I'm hoping we will be able to tell and profile and put on a pedestal.

The member also made comments about people who do re-enactments at these different sites. In eastern Ontario, at Crysler's Farm, we have the Friends of Crysler's Farm Battlefield Memorial. Every year they put on a celebration, a re-enactment. This year, on July 14 and 15, they will have another re-enactment at that site. Providing for this commemoration of the bicentennial will give added support to the good work these people do in encouraging people to travel and learn about their history and heritage, and also to present and tell the story

of this great province. It's one aspect of a great history that we have.

As a retired history teacher, I'm really proud to have had the opportunity of standing here and speaking to this bill.

1120

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I'm pleased to rise and speak on the resolution introduced by my colleague the member for York North, Julia Munro. I support establishing an independent commission on developing a plan for the bicentennial commemoration of the War of 1812.

This morning I want to take a few minutes to recognize the local efforts in my riding of Simcoe-Grey and in my home community of Wasaga Beach in presenting annual events that commemorate the War of 1812 at the Nancy Island Historic Site.

The Nancy was a schooner launched in November 1789. She originally sailed the upper Great Lakes as a private cargo vessel built for the fur trade before being pressed into service as a British supply ship in the War of 1812-14, which was fought, of course, between the United States and Britain in Upper Canada.

While in this service, the schooner was destroyed in the Nottawasaga River by American forces. When the United States declared war against Britain in 1812, the Nancy was wharfed at what is now called Windsor. At that time, the Nancy was requisitioned as a British transport, capable of mounting six four-pound carriage guns and six swivel guns, according to an inventory provided to General Isaac Brock.

During the summer and early autumn of her first year of war service in 1812, the Nancy sailed Lake Erie, transporting goods between Detroit and Fort Erie. Following a devastating battle in September 1813 against the British fleet, the Nancy was the sole surviving British ship left on the upper lakes. Until the summer of 1814, the Nancy continued in service as a transport to the British fleet between Fort Michilimackinac to the mouth of the Nottawasaga River.

Following the American forces' attack on Fort Michilimackinac in July 1814, the Nancy was hidden upriver two miles from the Nottawasaga supply base by Lieutenant Worsley and his force of 22 seamen and 23 native Canadians under the command of Lieutenant Ramsay Livingston and nine French-Canadian voyageurs.

When the Americans discovered the hidden Nancy, she was attacked by three American ships and 500 men armed with a formidable array of guns and weaponry. Knowing the situation was hopeless, and rather than let her fall into enemy hands, Lieutenant Worsley destroyed the Nancy in the Nottawasaga River.

Over the next 100 years, an island was established by the Nottawasaga River currents, gradually depositing silt on the sunken hull of the Nancy. It was not until July 1911 that Mr. C.J.H. Snider located the Nancy hull, which was at that time visible beneath the surface of the water. Another 14 years would pass, though, until the

Nancy was rediscovered by Dr. F.J. Conboy in 1925. More than 114 years following its destruction, the hull had been raised and placed on the island with the official opening of the Nancy Museum in 1928, designed to commemorate the site of the Nancy's demise and her gallant defence.

Now known as the Nancy Island Historic Site, this seasonal tourism destination operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Natural Resources in Wasaga Beach. As part of its commitment to sharing history, the Nancy Island Historic Site provides an annual re-enactment that attempts to capture the spirit of Lieutenant Worsley and his men during the 1814 battle of the schooner Nancy. Over the three-day event, the public is able to wander with up to 400 volunteer re-enactors staying on Nancy Island and participating in a grand encampment in historic 1812 fashion through what is called Wasaga Under Siege. The re-enactors include families that entertain visitors with military tactics and lifestyle activities that include live period music, meals prepared over open fires, musket and cannon demonstrations, settlers with their wares and a variety of other demonstrations. Re-enactments of historical and other fictional battles are fought in beach areas 1 and 2. The battles end with the British winning the local Nottawasaga battle.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I don't remember that battle.

Mr. Wilson: And it's the same thing every year.

The efforts of the Nancy Island Historic Site, featuring the Wasaga Under Siege re-enactment, were acknowledged in 2006 when they won the Wasaga Beach Chamber of Commerce business of the year award. The award recognized the role of the Nancy Island Historic Site through its historical programs and the 1812 re-enactments in making the community a tourist destination noted for its general service and hospitality in sharing such a remarkable history with all visitors.

In 2005, more than 4,000 visitors enjoyed the War of 1812 Wasaga Under Siege experience. In 2006, the Nancy Island Historic Site had almost 13,000 visitors. The economic contributions of these activities are significant to Wasaga Beach and our area communities. In this regard, attendance numbers to events at the island demonstrate the success of the interpretive education and historic programs offered to the public during a seasonal operation that provides three full-time summer jobs. Already, Wasaga Beach and the Nancy Island Historic Site have set aside the weekend of August 12-14, 2012, for the bicentennial event.

The War of 1812 is an important part of Ontario history. I'm happy to share the efforts of my riding to promote the events of the War of 1812 for both Ontarians and visitors in a meaningful, educational manner.

Let me conclude that, again, I'm pleased to support the resolution put forward by my colleague from York North establishing of the War of 1812 bicentennial commemoration. She certainly deserves great credit for bringing this forward.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I suspect, like pretty much everybody in the House today, that

we're all going to be supporting this initiative by the member for York North.

I wanted to focus my remarks in this regard on my own experience of growing up and being raised in a community where one of the great battles took place, and that's the Battle of Stoney Creek, and I'm sure that the member for Stoney Creek is going to be speaking about this as well. I'm a Creeker. I certainly did grow up in Stoney Creek. In fact, the Battle of Stoney Creek took place not too far from where I grew up. There is a monument there. There is a castle, if you want to call it that. There's a park, and every year there are re-enactments not only from Canadians who participate in the re-enactments but Americans come as well for these re-enactments. It's a fabulous celebration in our community of the history of what took place in Stoney Creek during the War of 1812.

I want to spend a little bit of time explaining exactly what exactly took place during the War of 1812 in the area of Stoney Creek, so I'm going to read from an article in the Upper Canada Tribute that was published June 7, 1813, and it says this:

"An American army was seen marching up the forested paths of Stoney Creek, towards Burlington Heights, by local settlers, 19-year-old Billy Green and his brother Levi, on June the 5th. This army of Yankees was the same group that had defeated General John Vincent's army, only a week earlier at Fort George. This army of about 3,000 troops (as told by witnesses) had walked up the trail, planning on trying their luck again, and to invade farther into Upper Canada.

"They stopped at a farm of the wealthy homeowner James Gage and made camp, as they were weary after the day's march, with little provisions. Some nearby settlers claimed to have seen the army walking quite a bit farther up the road, looking for a good area to set up camp, although obviously not thoroughly pleased with the land they then turned around, and marched back to the Gage farm. American Generals, Chandler and Winder, took control of the house, locking the large family in the cellar. The house became their headquarters.

"A local blacksmith named Isaac Corman, was taken to the encampment, as a prisoner. Corman let slip that he was Kentucky born, and related to an American general so they gave him leave, with the password, so that he would be able to get out of the camp safely. Billy Green learned the password from Corman, his brother-in-law."

The article goes on to describe the battle that ensued after the British troops decided that they were going to be able to take the Americans by surprise. Interestingly enough the battle, although the Americans had a larger number of troops, was won by the British largely because of this element of surprise and the fact that the American troops were caught unawares by the British and the surrounding settlers who joined in the battle. In fact, the way it's described, it says,

"When he arrived at the Heights, it was full of about 1,800 redcoats (most of them wounded and ill), local militiamen and civilians fleeing from the Yankees. There

were green-coated Glengarrys of the St. Lawrence, a company of black men commanded by Captain Robert Runchy, and regular soldiers, hundreds of miles away from their homes.” This describing the troops who gathered together to fight in that battle.

The article goes on to describe in great detail the skirmishes that occurred over those two days in the Battle of Stoney Creek. It concludes by saying,

“The Battle of Stoney Creek (June 5th and 6th) was a wise decision on the part of the British. Had the soldiers not marched up the path from Burlington Heights to Stoney Creek, the Americans would most likely be invading farther into Upper Canada at this very moment. Instead, they are believed to be heading with great speed towards the border, and it is all because of the short 45-minute battle fought in Stoney Creek.”

I know that the member in her comments remarked about the historic nature of the War of 1812 and what it meant for us as a Canadian nation. I think this one description, particularly of the Battle of Stoney Creek and the likelihood of advancement of the American forces, had that battle not been successful was certainly looming large in the mind of the writer of this article in the Upper Canada Tribute from back in 1813.

1130

I said at the beginning of my remarks that I grew up in Stoney Creek. As I was reading some of these articles and I came upon names like, of course, James Gage—anybody who has been to Hamilton know that Gage Avenue is a major street in our city. It will be the experience of all of the members, I’m sure, in this Legislature who have had historic commemorations of the events that took place over centuries in the past that many of the street names of those communities are named after significant players in some of those events.

In just this one article they refer to James Gage—of course, Gage Avenue being an important street in my own riding of Hamilton East—but also Billy Green, the young man who was the first to tip off the British about the advancing Americans. The member for Stoney Creek will know that Green Road is a very important street in the former city of Stoney Creek, which is now part of the larger city of Hamilton.

As well, this blacksmith named Isaac Corman—and, growing up in Stoney Creek, Corman Avenue was another street that a number of my friends lived on. I lived on Grays Road—that’s “Grays” with an “s,” as opposed to “Gray” with no “s,” which is a little controversy that continues to roar from time to time in Stoney Creek.

But nonetheless, growing up in Stoney Creek and knowing the history of the War of 1812 and the significant role that the battle of Stoney Creek played in that war, I was quite honoured about a year ago to be approached by an organization in Hamilton called the Canadian Club. The Canadian Club was commemorating an anniversary of theirs, a significant anniversary. They asked me to participate in a bit of a skit, if you will, in

period costume, commemorating some of the events of the Canadian Club.

In fact, the article I just read from the Upper Canada Tribute is illustrated with a painting by a woman named Sara Calder. Interestingly enough, Sara Calder was the woman whom they asked me to portray in this historical skit at the Scottish Rite Club, which is a fabulous facility in our downtown area.

The Canadian Club asked me to play the part of Sara Calder, so I needed to do a little bit of research on her. I found out—I was surprised they asked me to do it—that she was a very vocal woman of her time. She was a woman who was in the women’s auxiliary in the Canadian Club. One of the things she actually undertook, much to the chagrin of the gentlemen of the Canadian Club at the time, was an effort to raise funds to develop a memorial for the battle of Stoney Creek. Sara Calder was pooh-poohed by the gentlemen of the Canadian Club and told that there is no way the monument would be able to be funded and there was no way there would be enough monies raised to put together a monument to the battle of Stoney Creek.

She said, “No, I don’t agree with you. I am going to go and make this effort on my own with the ladies’ auxiliary, and we’re going to put up a monument to the battle of Stoney Creek.” Sara Calder went ahead, notwithstanding the disdain of the male members of the club, and made sure the money was put together to raise the monument at the battlefield which now exists, at which there are many celebrations that take place memorializing or commemorating the war.

Having said that, one of the other things I think is interesting is that Sara Calder—which is why there’s a painting of hers in this article—was a founding member of the Women’s Art Association of Hamilton. To her credit, she had spent a great deal of time painting various scenes around Stoney Creek and around the community at the time. Some of those paintings recently were brought back to the battlefield and are actually displayed there at Battlefield Park in the Gage House, I believe, although I’m not sure exactly where the paintings sit at this time.

So it was quite fortuitous that the member brings this particular resolution forward, and it’s one that I certainly will be supporting, because I’ve had the opportunity a couple of times now to reflect upon not only the War of 1812 but specifically the battle of Stoney Creek and to learn so much more about that in my participation with the Canadian Club in their efforts to do some fundraising, quite frankly, but to also spend some time commemorating their own history as an organization in Hamilton.

I have to say that the reality of war is not a pleasant one, ever. As we go through, hopefully, the efforts of putting together the commemoration of this war in various communities in Canada and in the United States, I think it’s important to remember that there are many people who were not memorialized in any of the monuments, or at least not in many of them.

I wanted to refer particularly to the First Nations communities that participated in many of the battles. I

would hope that we make sure that we're engaging First Nations communities in terms of their efforts that they added to this monumental occasion back in 1812.

People will know that there were a number of black slaves who had fled America and had come to Canada, either as slaves, initially, or through the Underground Railway and other initiatives to flee from slavery, and those men were also participants, on behalf of the British, in the War of 1812.

So, as we go through this commemoration process, as we go through this process of putting together the various events that, as the member indicated in her resolution, will be tourist draws and important times to reflect on our history, I think we need to really make sure that we're engaging First Nations and the black community to make sure that their role is not overlooked and that they are equally memorialized in our efforts as we move forward.

As I was reading through this article on the battle of Stoney Creek, one of the things that comes straight out at you is—they're talking about the legacy of the war. Interestingly enough, although we see the War of 1812 from the perspective of our nation-building, if you like, in terms of the British-American issues that were on the table, some would say that there really was no resolution, that the War of 1812 didn't really resolve any of the outstanding issues that brought it to a head in the first place. Having said that, though, one of the things that does come through clearly is—in this article, it says, "Although a monument is raised in honour of the soldiers involved, no Mohawk warriors are credited in it for doing battle."

There was a corps called Runchy's Coloured Corps that actually fought at the battle of Stoney Creek—and there were other participants from the black community.

I have to say that as we go forward and we look towards the celebrations, we have to make sure that those celebrations reflect accurately on all of the various players who participated on behalf of the British in the War of 1812.

I know that there are other members from the Niagara region who are going to be speaking to this as well.

As a person who grew up in that area, the significance of the War of 1812 for many of the communities in that area is nothing to dismiss. It's something that was part of my growing up, part of my heritage. At Battlefield Park, particularly, not only were there re-enactments, but there were often fireworks celebrations on Canada Day and Victoria Day. That was certainly a great part of my growing up.

I can only look back to people like Sara Calder and others who had the foresight to make the big effort and to raise the funds to put these memorials together. As I look back at my youth and the times that I spent at Battlefield Park, particularly, I know that if it wasn't for their efforts at that time, there certainly wouldn't have been the memories that I have around Battlefield Park. That's probably the similar experience of many members here who have those kinds of memorials in their communities.

As we go forward with this initiative—and I certainly hope the member from York North gets full support for

her resolution—let's make sure that on this bicentennial celebration effort, not only are we pulling in some of those participants who perhaps were overlooked in the previous memorializations of these battles, but that we are then setting a new foundation for the children and the young people of today to remember the significance of the War of 1812 to Canada.

1140

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member from historical Stoney Creek.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I rise today to support, of course, this motion coming from the member from York North, whom I really do respect for all the work she has done in heritage and culture. She was my predecessor as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture, so I take particular interest in this.

However, you cannot talk about the War of 1812 without talking about Stoney Creek, as you've just heard. It was the turning point of that war, the battle of Stoney Creek, and it is re-enacted in exquisite detail, magnificent energy and enthusiasm every year on the first weekend in June. I invite each and every one of you to come back. You will be absolutely amazed. You will think you have stepped back in time, because the Americans, the British, the Canadians, the Mohawks—they all come. They are in full authentic regalia. These volunteers, these individuals, through their own money, their own effort, create these garments and these costumes. They have tents set up; there are fires burning; there are muskets roaring. It's quite an amazing site to see. I think it's June 2 this year. It's a Saturday, right after the Flag Day parade in Stoney Creek. I invite you all to come and spend the day in Stoney Creek to see the battle of Stoney Creek.

I have to just take a moment: The re-enactment happens at Battlefield House Museum and Park—32 acres in Stoney Creek of nature, trails, herb gardens, a lovely monument and two early-19th-century houses which are impeccably restored. It's amazing, the work that is done by the staff and the volunteers who keep this house—there are two houses, because they moved Nash-Jackson House there, and it's spectacular. I was very privileged to be able to take a cheque for \$300,000 from this government to Battlefield House Museum and Park recently to make sure that they are ready for the big anniversary coming up.

I'm very quickly going to try to capture some of the excitement of that battle, because nothing goes as planned, does it? We all think back—oh, there was a battle; these guys went over here and they won, and then these guys went over there and they won. But it doesn't always work that way. Actually, it's a little of: you're on, you're off, and things get messed up.

On May 27, the Americans had captured the British position at Fort George and the British, under Brigadier General John Vincent, retreated to Burlington Heights. The Americans, under the overall leadership of General Henry Dearborn, were slow to pursue, but when they finally did so, a force numbering 3,400 under Brigadiers General John Chandler and William Winder advanced to

Stoney Creek, where they encamped on June 5. The two generals set up headquarters at the Gage farm, which is now Battlefield House, and you can see it.

One of Vincent's staff officers, Lieutenant Colonel John Harvey, reconnoitred the American position and determined that it was badly placed and inadequately protected. He recommended making a night attack. The British column, 700 men from the 8th and 49th regiments, were guided to the American camp by a local farmhand—Billy Green, the scout, already remarked on by the member from Hamilton East—and I can tell you, there's a Billy Green Elementary School in my riding which is taking part in the healthy schools challenge, which is a much better battle to be involved in, but I digress.

So the British arrive, and little Billy Green had been able to find out the American password and the American challenge, which was brilliant work on his part. The British arrived in position at 2 a.m. on June 7, and began advancing towards the American campfires, but in the darkness they stumbled into American soldiers. Either Indians or the British—we're not sure who—raised the Indian war whoop immediately and the Americans were alerted. Harvey had already ordered the flints to be removed from British muskets so that there wouldn't be any premature firing, no mistakes to alert the Americans, and some of the units had actually even unloaded their muskets. So the small party, under Major Charles Plenderleath, rushed forward to capture four American guns with the bayonet, but most of the British were still back there, trying to get their flints going, their muskets going, and they were more surprised than the Americans, because there they were in the heat of battle and they didn't even have their guns ready to go. So, you see, it doesn't always go very smoothly.

Now, where are we here? Winder mistook British troops for his own men and he got captured, so there was another misstep in all of this. Major Joseph Lee Smith of the 25th US Infantry saw the capture of Winder and he alerted his men and was able to reverse.

Even though things were going so terribly for the British, this actually did end up being the turning point, because the casualties in this confused fight had been about even, and the Americans had been shaken by this. With their general's capture, the American colonels decided that Dragoon Commander James Burn was the man to go ahead, but he was already criticized for having made a mess of a previous attack, and he made a bit of a hash of his next step. The American flotilla on the lake that had been supplying all these guys got wind of things going badly, so they retreated, and eventually it was this big skirmish at Stoney Creek that got the Americans into retreat mode, and finally they retreated all the way back across the river.

Despite my enthusiasm in describing this great battle, I am conflicted to a certain extent in promoting the celebration of a war. But in our modern-day celebrations of these things, we do focus more on the vagaries of war, and we focus on the need to find alternatives to solving our differences and our conflicts, other than through war

and through violence. In fact, over the centuries we have learned that sitting down and talking to each other actually is a very effective manner and method of resolving our differences. If it was not a very effective means of resolving our differences, then the history of mankind would indeed be very different. In fact, if war and violence were the only solution, we would not be here at all at this point.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): Let me start my remarks by saying that I'm pleased to stand today and support the resolution on the creation of a War of 1812 bicentennial commemoration commission by my colleague sitting right beside me, the member from York North.

The War of 1812 was a defining moment certainly in our history as Canadians, and indeed for those now living in the province of Ontario. I phoned my brother, who is quite a history buff and a history teacher, to get a follow-up, and I could not, of course, in the time we are allowed, say all the things that he told me about the War of 1812. But his theme was that there is not enough emphasis put on the history of our great country that is being taught to our children, and on the noticeable achievements of our ancestors before us. It is taking a backseat in our schools. Our students can name past US Presidents, but they can't name maybe the heroes of the War of 1812, and I think that is quite a tragedy that we should start to rectify.

So despite the fact that many causes of the War of 1812 were geographically far removed from our colony of Upper Canada at that time, our lands proved to be the immediate battleground of much of the war, and many of my colleagues have mentioned what battles took place in their ridings. They didn't come as far north and east as my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock. But it was a significant demonstration by Canadians to remain independent of the United States and loyal to the British crown. The war of 1812 was the first time that native Canadians, French Canadians and British colonials fought together in defence of their land. I believe there were even some regiments from as far away as Newfoundland that were sent to help the United Empire Loyalists up here in Ontario.

The numbers would not exceed 100,000 in total, but in the face of adversity, Canadians of all backgrounds proved themselves and heroes emerged, heroes such as Sir Isaac Brock. To many, the hero of Upper Canada is best remembered as a brilliant leader and strategist in battle. He was promoted to Major General of the "49th foot" in 1811 and was made provisional administrator of Upper Canada.

1150

Despite Brock's early preparations for the upcoming war, his men were gravely outnumbered. He was concerned about the loyalties of some of the people to the British crown, but the province's inhabitants consisted at that point, as I said, of United Empire Loyalists and of "late Loyalists," who had just recently arrived from the United States. Brock's immediate superior, the Governor of Canada, Sir George Provost, urged Brock to remain on

the defensive and not risk battle, but Sir Isaac Brock would go to lead his men to fight valiantly on behalf of the crown. And even when fatally wounded, he encouraged his York volunteers to push on. So Brock's memory as the fallen hero and saviour of Upper Canada has remained extraordinarily strong in Ontario's history, and we must ensure that those efforts are not forgotten.

Similarly, we must remember the efforts of another great hero, Ms. Laura Secord, whose portrait hangs in this very building. While billeting American soldiers in her home, she and her husband overheard the American plan to attack the British forces, and with help from the native forces, who were allies of the British, Laura Secord was able to complete the arduous, I believe 20-mile journey, to warn the local British commander, Lieutenant James FitzGibbon of the impending American attack. So the courage and tenacity displayed in the efforts on this occasion, June 1813, places her certainly in the forefront of the province's heroines. I believe there's a simple frame building, restored in 1971, that remains as a memorial to the exceptional patriotism that she showed.

We want our children to understand and preserve stories like those of Isaac Brock, Laura Secord and native leaders like Tecumseh, and we need to commemorate those people who fought so valiantly to defend people of the province that we as MPPs now work so hard to represent.

So the creation of a War of 1812 bicentennial commission would be a significant step towards adequately honouring and celebrating our history in this province. I want to commend the member from York North for bringing this forward and look for all-parties' support on that. Thank you.

Mr. Hudak: I'm pleased to rise and support my colleague from York North, Ms. Munro, on her resolution today. I think we all know Ms. Munro as a dedicated educator who spent a good part of her life in instilling in her students an appreciation and a deep understanding of Canadian history and a pride in civic life. As an MPP in her second career, she continues to walk that talk with her resolution before the assembly today, which I as a Niagara member stand in proud support of.

My colleagues from Stoney Creek and Hamilton East paid great tribute to the Battle of Stoney Creek and the roles of Canadian heroes like Billy Green and of course Isaac Brock. We all in Niagara know Sir Isaac Brock very well and the role he played, sadly dying relatively early on in the War of 1812 at the Battle of Queenston Heights. Sir Isaac Brock, of course, has a highway named after him now and our university, a fine university, in St. Catharines-Thorold.

I'll talk a little bit about the Battle of Fort Erie, which is the town I was born and raised in. Growing up in Fort Erie, we always spent time, as kids, at church picnics or hanging out at the fort. At that time, as a child, it was an interesting place to try to sneak into, over those walls, where you'd see the occasional redcoat pass by. I think my colleague probably may have done the same. You'd try to sneak by the redcoats. We all knew of a friend of a

friend of a friend who swore that they'd shoot at you if they saw you, but I don't think there was ever any evidence of the redcoats turning on the students.

But as you grew older, you had a greater appreciation for that institution and the role that Fort Erie played in the War of 1812. Of course, before the battle it was simply a small British military post, not even a fort, that became an important site. The Americans took control in July of 1814, which led up to a siege lasting until mid-September of 1814. Both sides saw massive casualties, and we'd argue that Fort Erie was among the bloodiest battlefields during of War of 1812, and ever on Canadian soil.

On November 5, 1814, the US troops then retreated after this long siege into Buffalo, but on their way blew up the fort, sending some 25% of it totally destroyed. It sat, as a matter of fact, in rubble for over 115 years and then was restored as part of a massive project in the 1930s. It's now part of the Niagara Parks Commission, one of the great sites along the parkway. I'm pleased to see the Minister of Tourism here for this debate this morning because I know of his dedication to the parks commission, and I'm pleased to see that the old fort in Fort Erie remains one of its key attractions.

A notable hero, just to connect the two parts of my riding, was Lieutenant Colonel Robert Nelles. He was one of the heroes of the British side at that time, of course a United Empire Loyalist, and his group, comprised of 40 Loyalists, founded the town of Grimsby, in the west end of Niagara, known then as "The Forty." Nelles of course was a very brave lieutenant colonel and, under his leadership, many of the war strategies and planning sessions took place at his home in Grimsby in preparation for the war.

I'm pleased of course to see Tecumseh recognized as well today. If not for the role of First Nations peoples under the brave Tecumseh at the time, we may have had a different outcome. The British were engaged in a full battle with Napoleon in Europe at the time, which engaged most British forces. The British regulars were tremendously outnumbered by the Americans across the way, the Americans, of course, hoping at the time that Canadians, or those who had recently left the States to settle in Upper Canada, would join their side and rally against the crown. Of course, an important part of our history, something we should take great pride in, is that the vast majority of Canadians rallied to the British side and took up with them and, with the great support of Tecumseh and the First Nations people, helped to win many of the major battles that have been referenced in the assembly here today.

My last point is, I'm very pleased to hear that some work is currently under way. It's hard to imagine a day when Lake Erie and Lake Ontario were both part of pitched naval battles not that long ago. I look forward to working with Ms. Munro and members of the assembly of all three parties in helping to commemorate what was a sad time of course, full of death and destruction, but also a point that helped forge us as a nation and

something worth celebrating for the Canadian heroes and First Nations heroes mentioned in the assembly today.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I wanted to say that this is precisely how this hour should be used, and the member for York North is to be commended in bringing forward—it used to be the way private members' public business was. It was relatively non-partisan, something that was of specific interest to a person. I'm delighted, knowing that all three parties have changed that somewhat now, but this is a nice exception today. I don't know whether the commission itself—some people look at that as bureaucratic—is the answer, but I want to really commend the member for bringing that suggestion forward. I know she would be willing to work, because I look at this as a non-partisan issue with people from all three parties probably in trying to establish a way of celebrating the War of 1812-14.

My parliamentary assistant, the member for Cornwall and other places, has already said what the ministry is doing, and we're engaged in some of that. The member's quite right in saying that there are some additional steps that have to be taken as we get closer. The commission might be it; it might be an all-party committee of the Legislature. There may be some mechanism.

The member deserves credit for bringing this forward. It definitely has to be commended. I was with the American Consul in Niagara Falls. I got blessed with some award for tourism by national tourism, and he was presenting it. I said at the time to our American friends, just be to accommodating, that when they came over here to visit, we would tell them they won the war as long as when Canadians went over there, they would admit that Canada had won the war.

This is going to be a great occasion. It offers great opportunities for tourism and heritage and history. I was a history teacher at one time as well, so those of us who have been teachers recognize how important this is and those of us from the Niagara region know how important this is. So thank you very much for bringing this forward to the House for consideration.

The Deputy Speaker: Notwithstanding the non-partisan position of the Chair, I'm sure someone in this debate wanted to mention historic Fort Malden in Amherstburg.

Mrs. Munro, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Munro: First of all, I want to thank all of you who have taken part in the debate today. What you did, in using your time to highlight the work that is being done in your own communities, is precisely what I hoped would happen because in the opportunity that I had, obviously it would be impossible to demonstrate the kinds of good work that is done in so many of our communities. I think these projects and activities, quite frankly, underline the importance of having a commission whose scope would be province-wide. Certainly I appreciate the comments, particularly of the minister, in recognizing the fact that we need to be going from the

individual communities and the work they are doing to be able to have some province-wide scope.

My vision in bringing this forward is quite frankly based on the assumption that as more and more communities look into their roots, they in fact are going to find that they have an opportunity to participate in this as well. I think that's extremely important, again, to have a provincial framework. As I mentioned in my remarks, other governments are working on this. And I guess I would want to conclude that just as we did 200 years ago, we have to be ready to go toe-to-toe with our partners.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT (DIRECT ELECTION OF DURHAM REGIONAL COUNCIL CHAIR), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS (ÉLECTION AU SCRUTIN GÉNÉRAL DU PRÉSIDENT DU CONSEIL RÉGIONAL DE DURHAM)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time provided for private members' public business having expired, we shall first deal with ballot item number 75 standing in the name of Mr. Ouellette.

Mr. Ouellette has moved second reading of bill 172. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye".

All those opposed, say "nay".

In my opinion, the ayes have it. It's carried.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I would request that the bill be referred to the general government committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Ouellette has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government. Agreed? Agreed.

WAR OF 1812

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 76 standing in the name of Mrs. Munro.

Mrs. Munro has moved private members' motion number 50. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The Deputy Speaker: All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair, and the House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1202 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Despite a scathing report by the Ombudsman and numerous media reports revealing the shameful extent of the OLG lottery scandal, this government continues to dodge leg-

itimate and explicit questions about their lack of leadership on this issue. Rather than doing the honourable thing and taking responsibility for the actions, or inaction, of this government that have worked to create this large-scale scandal in Ontario's lottery system, you are busy at work creating a cover-up and communications strategy. While innocent Ontarians were being cheated out of their legitimate lottery winnings, you and your political advisers were involved in an attempt to spin the scandal by discrediting the CBC report.

If, as you claim, you did nothing wrong and you did everything you possibly could from the moment you were made aware of insider lottery wins, then why are you refusing to make public the information that we are requesting? You claim to want a more transparent and reliable lottery system that will properly protect the public, but at the same time you are refusing to provide the public with the information they deserve. They have a right to know why it took this government so long to respond to reports of insider lottery wins and why, when a response did finally come, it was in the form of a scandal cover-up rather than a sincere attempt to clean up this disturbing mess.

If you have nothing to hide, as you claim, then you should respond to our freedom of information request and order paper questions and provide the people of this province with the information they so rightly deserve.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): The residents of west Toronto and the St. Clair revitalization group have a great planning idea that the city of Toronto and the federal government should take seriously.

Go Transit is presently working to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing; it's called the "diamond grade."

As you know, the TTC is presently constructing a TTC right-of-way along of all St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair-Old Weston Road bridge. The road—that is, St. Clair Avenue—passes under the bridge. It will be too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane for traffic. It also creates a divide, a barrier, a no-man's-land between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. This was acceptable when the area consisted of slaughterhouses, but now it has 900 homes.

The residents are asking that the present tunnelling extend beyond St. Clair Avenue so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue, thus eliminating this barrier. Since the province is ready to support this proposal, I'm asking the city of Toronto and the federal government to do their part as well.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I speak for the people of Ontario, and Halton in particular, when I express my

outrage, disappointment and disgust with this government's handling of Lottogate.

The Premier and his minister responsible for lotteries are hiding behind a Maginot line of silence. For weeks now, this government has shown us that direct questions do not receive direct answers. In fact, no question receives the dignity of an answer from this government. That fact is also being addressed by the press, thanks to Murray Campbell in today's *Globe and Mail*.

Yet the Premier and his Lottogate minister continue to play the waiting game. They think that if they just wait long enough, this issue will go away. Well, that's Peter Pan politics. Peter Pan politics is when you all sit in a circle, you hold hands, and you wish really hard that the problem will go away.

That is a very dangerous tactic. Too many questions remain unanswered, questions like: What is going to happen to the Lanark-Carleton constituent who may be out \$12.5 million? Who was at these secret meetings? What was discussed? Why did it take so long to start implementing change? How do we know if anything has changed, and how will we ever know that it's changed? When is this Premier going to face up to the facts and finally start giving taxpayers the answers they deserve?

We all know the fate of the Maginot line: a massive flanking movement rendered it irrelevant. Eventually, the waiting game will be over. The memos and the e-mails and the truth behind the secret meetings will come out. Eventually, taxpayers will get the answers they deserve.

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): Each and every day across Ontario, thousands of men and women in uniform put their lives on the line to protect our safety and enforce our laws. The 24,000 police officers of our province perform brave and courageous service on behalf of all Ontarians. I've had the privilege in the past of joining them for ride-alongs and have witnessed firsthand the hazards they face on a daily basis.

Tonight, I shall be attending a special function celebrating the conclusion of the lengthy careers of five officers who have a combined service of more than 150 years as dedicated members of the Toronto Police Service. I want to recognize not only these fine gentlemen, but also their families, who have given up precious family time to support their loved one's chosen career of exemplary community service.

I proudly recognize from the Toronto Police Service, 12 Division, Sergeant Bruce Bolitho, who served for 31 years; Staff Sergeant Christopher Hobson, who served for 33 years; Police Constable Robert Muckle, who served for 30 years; Police Constable Glenn Sluman, who served for 31 years; and Police Constable James Terry, who served for 33 years.

I ask all members in this House to join with me in saluting these five officers and in wishing them a very happy and lengthy retirement.

ORLEANS YOUNG PLAYERS
THEATRE SCHOOL

THÉÂTRE JEUNESSE D'ORLÉANS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): On Saturday, March 31, I had the pleasure of announcing that the Ontario Trillium Foundation has awarded an \$18,000 grant to the Orleans Young Players theatre group. This theatre school has been teaching youth about all aspects of theatre work since 1989. With more than 240 students, it is helping young people in Orléans develop their theatrical skills and talents, while teaching them valuable life skills such as team-building, communications and self confidence.

Kathi Langston is the artistic director at the school and she says the grant will be used to provide students with voice training from radio experts. It will also give them the opportunity to work with Rag & Bone Puppet Theatre and let the students create productions featuring the work of James Rainey, an acclaimed Canadian author and playwright. The students at this school will be able to showcase their work in almost 30 different productions to an estimated 10,000 people this year alone. They will also be able to produce DVDs of their work which can be shown in local schools for many years to come.

La Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario, organisme relevant du ministère de la Culture, reçoit chaque année du gouvernement 100 \$ millions provenant de l'initiative des casinos de bienfaisance de la province.

With the help of this funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, these children will be able to expand their work and become an even more integral part of the culture of our community. I would like to congratulate the Orleans Young Players and wish them a very successful season.

ONTARIO LOTTERY
AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I looked in the Gage Canadian Thesaurus this morning to see what synonyms appear under "Liberal government." Here's a report of my findings: "stonewall, block, gain time, hem and haw, hold out, hold up, obstruct, play for time, resist, stall, thwart, use delay tactics."

Any one of these verbs describes how Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan operate when our leader, John Tory, and members of the PC caucus ask them "Who, what, why, when and where?" questions about secret meetings involving ministers' office staff and Liberal election campaign staff to cover up Lottogate.

It's the same game, a scandal that even has the same player: Warren Kinsella. Yes, folks, it's the same Warren Kinsella who testified before the Gomery inquiry about the federal sponsorship scandal. Now he's back, like a recurring rash, as one of several people associated with the cover-up to keep the lid on Lottogate. I wonder, will there be more secret meetings so people like Warren

Kinsella, Wilson Lee, Don Guy, Jim Warren and Bob Lopinski can all sit down and get their stories straight?

1340

YMCA OF PETERBOROUGH

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I am pleased to rise in the House to recognize the grand opening of the Peterborough YMCA on March 2, 2007. Founded in 1868, the Peterborough YMCA continues to be a stalwart of our community, providing services to each and every township within Peterborough city and county.

I wish to acknowledge the hard work of Bob Gallagher, CEO of the Peterborough YMCA, as well as the board of directors, staff, community partners and countless volunteers for their tireless work on the Building New Memories capital campaign to raise funds for the \$13-million sport and recreation facility.

On February 12 this year, I had the distinct pleasure of announcing, with my colleague the Honourable Jim Watson, Minister of Health Promotion, an investment of \$3 million for the new Peterborough YMCA. These funds are part of our government's \$190-million economic stimulus plan to foster a strong workforce and a strong economy in the riding of Peterborough.

I would ask that all members join with me in recognizing the efforts of the many individuals and organizations that have helped the Peterborough YMCA realize their dream of a new sport and recreation facility in the great community of Peterborough.

CLARKE ROAD SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): I rise in the House today to congratulate Clarke Road Secondary School in my riding of London–Fanshawe for accepting the Ontario government's healthy schools challenge. I am proud that Clarke Road Secondary School has accepted this challenge, because research shows that a healthy school environment supports student success. I am proud that the McGuinty government has taken the initiative to implement programs within our public schools to promote and encourage active and healthy lifestyles.

The healthy schools challenge is a wonderful program, and I would like to thank the Minister of Health Promotion and the Minister of Education for implementing this program in our schools across the province of Ontario.

I believe that the teachers and students of Clarke Road Secondary School will benefit greatly from this wonderful program. Again, I would like to congratulate Clarke Road Secondary School on accepting the healthy schools challenge. I think it's a great initiative.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak in support of this program.

TRICIA CUMMINGS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I would like to acknowledge a remarkable young

lady of great courage from my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. Petty Officer Second Class Tricia Cummings of the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets was recently honoured with the medal of bravery for her act in leading three children she was babysitting out of a burning house.

This award holds great distinction, as it has only been awarded to six cadets in the past 112 years. This medal is usually reserved for soldiers and firefighters and those who risk their lives every day. To have it bestowed on one of my constituents, and at the young age of 16, fills me with a great sense of pride. In addition to this wonderful acknowledgement, she was also awarded the fire safety award certificate by the Ontario Fire Marshal's office.

I would like to publicly acknowledge Tricia and her actions, and to thank her on behalf of all constituents for her outstanding action and achievement. This young woman embodies the spirit and courage of the citizens of this great province and also of my riding. I am proud to say that of the six past cadet recipients, two are from my riding. This pays tribute to my constituents: people who do not panic, who use their heads, who are not afraid to get their hands dirty and who get the job done. I would also like to salute the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets, whose commitment to duty and discipline, I'm sure, helped Tricia as she faced this dangerous situation.

Tricia was faced with circumstances that most of us dread, and she performed admirably. I wish to congratulate her for a job well done.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTION OF MINORS IN AMATEUR SPORTS ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007

SUR LA PROTECTION DES MINEURS PARTICIPANT À DES SPORTS AMATEURS

Mr. Ouellette moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 201, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports / Projet de loi 201, Loi visant à protéger les mineurs qui participent à des sports amateurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): There are tens of thousands of volunteers in the province of Ontario participating in volunteer sports on a daily and weekly basis. As mentioned in debate earlier on, I happen to coach hockey. Although managers, trainers and coaches are all require criminal record or vulnerable persons police checks, somebody approached me at an arena one day and said that a convicted sex offender was refereeing

six-, seven- and eight-year-olds. Upon checking and verifying, we found out that, yes, this individual should not be out there, and we checked, to follow through, that there was no vulnerable persons police check required for individuals refereeing sports. Subsequent to that, we checked around the province and it applies to a lot of other sports in the province. We are following through on cleaning up a few holes to make sure that kids are safe in the province of Ontario.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr. Bisson and Mr. Kormos exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Kormos assumes ballot item number 77 and Mr. Bisson assumes ballot item number 78.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

MEL SWART

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak up for to five minutes to remember a former member of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): It is an honour to be able to speak about our former colleague Mel Swart.

This is one of those times when you could not possibly have enough time to say everything you want to say. When I was first elected to this House in 1987, Mel was a veteran. He had already been here 12 years. It was the beginning of his fifth term. He was one of the people who had been here for many of the historic battles.

I had heard a lot about him from about 1975 on, because I had worked in election campaigns and had been an unsuccessful candidate in a couple of campaigns. Always, you heard about the work and the advocacy of Mel Swart. What absolutely amazed me when I was first elected was that I thought, when I came in to work at 7 in the morning, that I would somehow be setting the bar. I would come in at 7 in the morning, and Mel Swart would

already be at his desk. Not only would he already be at his desk, but he'd have papers here, he'd be on the phone to somebody and he'd have some other project going on the work table beside his desk. Similarly, I thought on the evenings when I'd go home at, say, 11 o'clock that I was setting some kind of bar, only to look down the hall and see Mel Swart in his office on the phone, making notes—little yellow stickies all over the bulletin board reminding himself of the five, six or seven things he had to do. Occasionally I would come into the office on a Sunday night and there again, getting ready for Monday—perhaps it was a special project he had under way—would be Mel Swart. He was an absolutely tireless worker, and he worked just as hard, even more so, in his constituency than here at Queen's Park.

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I used to marvel at him in caucus meetings. Mel never tried to lecture anyone. He never, ever spoke down to anyone. His conversations with you were always that: open, earnest and honest conversations. Occasionally, someone in the caucus would pretend, or thought for a second or so, that they were smarter than Mel. Mel would listen to them quietly and politely. Meanwhile, you could tell that the wheels were turning, and at the end of the caucus meeting or the question period meeting, the person who inevitably came out on top was Mel Swart. Mel was not someone to boast; he was not someone to talk about his own accomplishments. He was always engaged in the next part of the plan, the next project that had to be undertaken. So he didn't take the time to boast.

Mel came honestly by his advocacy for working people. He was one of those people who was a child of the Depression. He knew what it was like to grow up at a time when almost everyone was poor. And he saw some of the great contradictions of the Depression. One of his jobs was to deliver milk, as a milkman. At the same time that he was delivering milk, and saw that many people could barely afford to buy a quart of milk even though their families needed it badly, farmers would be pouring out milk that they couldn't sell—the big contradictions. But Mel was not the kind of person to cry over spilled milk. He was the kind of person to say, "This is wrong and we need to do something about it." That's what he dedicated his life to: making the world a better place for ordinary folks, for working people.

And what a job he did. His achievements include preserving the rich fruit-growing lands of Niagara by helping to found the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and the Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society. He also helped to create the St. Johns Conservation Area. He helped to found Brock University so Niagara's working families could send their kids to university within their community and not have to send them far away.

But the thing I miss most about Mel and which I remember the most about him is not necessarily the accomplishments, but it is the sincerity: always open, always sincere, always honest, often quiet conversation, but an openness and an honesty behind which, if you

didn't look carefully, you'd miss the conviction, the steely conviction, to make a difference.

Mel would come here to the Legislature—and we now have this rule that you're not allowed to use props. That's a shame, because Mel Swart made this place into a living theatre with his props. He would bring fruits and vegetables and even toilet paper to make a case of how consumers were being ripped off. Every night on the news you'd see him make the case, and it was such good theatre. Everyone at home appreciated and understood the message, and it was so effective. He would make the case, and three or four days later you'd see changes happening. Companies had been identified, retailers had come under the pressure and it made a big difference for working people. And it made people smile. It made people appreciate the kind of work that an elected representative could do for people. It made people come around to Mel's way of thinking. Mel always asked the question, "What is this going to do for the ordinary working person? What difference is it going to make for the ordinary working person?"

Mel's family is here today. It's a large family: children, grandchildren and I understand a great-granddaughter. It's great to see them here. Mel was predeceased by his wife, Thelma, but his daughter, Melva, is here and her husband, Peter; his son, Orlen, and his wife, Elaine, and, as I say, his four grandchildren and a great-granddaughter.

Mel was a champion for Niagara. He was a champion for fairness. He was principled, he was pugnacious, he was a thundering voice of justice. He was a champion for ordinary people. This Legislature can be proud that Mel Swart served here. He made this Legislature a better place. He made it a meaningful place for ordinary folks virtually every day he was here.

We say to his family, thank you very much for sharing this wonderful man with us. He inspired many of us. He continues to inspire many of us today.

I'll give the final word to Graham Murray, a friend of this Legislature and a friend and colleague of Mel Swart. He said, "Watch out, God. Mel will be holding you to account five minutes after St. Peter waves [Mel] through the Pearly Gates." I think that is a very true assessment of Mel Swart.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: This is a day that you always hope doesn't happen, particularly when it's about a good friend, Mel Swart. I guess the real day that we hoped wouldn't happen—and it does in all of our lives—was the day the news came that Mel had passed away. We had watched him—those of us who were close friends and knew him well—as he had his major challenges with health, particularly in his latter days.

It was interesting to watch, and not surprising, as he maintained a schedule which most people of his age and in his circumstances of health could not possibly have kept up. In fact, Peter Kormos—I'm allowed to use his name today, I guess, in this instance—and I were going to be two of the speakers at a dinner for Mel to be held in March of this year. The dinner was always for something

good. It wasn't for Mel. Sometimes it was for the Mel Swart park, which was suitably located in Thorold—and great for the people of that community and other communities—or it was for the church. There was always something that it was for; it was never for Mel himself. We didn't have that dinner, but we had many dinners with Mel and many circumstances where we had the privilege to share his company.

When colleagues around the House heard that Mel had passed away, particularly those who had served with him, there was a genuine sadness. Monte Kwinter said to me at a cabinet meeting after that, "I see Mel Swart passed away. Mel was quite a character." You will remember, some of you who were here and those who watched on TV, that Mel used to wag his finger and wave various items at Mr. Kwinter when he was the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Yet the affection we all had for Mel, whether he was tearing a strip off you or not over an issue, was legend. Those of us who had the privilege of knowing him personally and watching him personally could not help but admire him, as the leader of the New Democratic Party indicated. All of us admired his work ethic in particular.

Mel would sometimes—in fact, often—take the train from St. Catharines. We used to sit on Friday mornings, and we would make an arrangement where I would drive Mel back to the train station in St. Catharines. The problem was, the backseat of the car was always full of toilet paper and vegetables and a variety of other things that Mel was going to take to his next speaking engagement. But we had interesting discussions that went on during that. The odd time I would drop something off on Richmond Street, where Mel lived at the time, some envelope or something he'd asked me to drop off. He was a legend in this House and a legend in the Niagara Peninsula. I know the member for Niagara Centre, Peter Kormos, who followed in his footsteps, recognized how difficult it was to follow in a legend's footsteps of that kind.

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The thing you knew about Mel was, it was always about the issue; it was never about Mel Swart. He didn't care about personal publicity. The fact that he was getting on television or in the newspaper and so on was to accentuate something about that issue, not accentuate anything about Mel Swart. He didn't care about that. He didn't care about fame or fortune in any way.

A fact a lot of you don't know: he was a stock car race fan. I would listen to him sometimes before we were leaving, and he'd have a 15-minute description of a stock car race that had taken place the night before, obviously talking to his brother about that. More recently, I introduced him at a seniors' concert. He was there and I was on the stage. I spotted Mel out in the audience, and Mel was really thrilled to be there. And of course, again, in not great health, but the loudest cheer was when you introduced Mel Swart, bar none; the loudest cheer came then.

Then I had an opportunity to talk to him just a few weeks before he passed away. We were talking about the

future, of course, because Mel always thought about the future. At the age of 87 and with many health challenges, Mel was right with it. He knew what was going on. He was talking about the issues of the day and what would be happening at the dinner that was going to be held and where the proceeds would go. So he was genuinely a gentleman and genuinely concerned, sincere, honest.

There were a few things said about Mel Swart that I think bear repeating. There are people who are more famous then we are sometimes because they're in the media. But I will take a line or two because they just captured Mel. Jim Coyle, when he was at the Ottawa Citizen and Mel was retiring, said, "Swart's [political convictions] are rooted in hard times, grown strong through adversity, nurtured in the heart." James Wallace, when he was with the Toronto Sun: "Swart is everything attractive and infuriating about the NDP—idealistic, passionate uncompromising on principle." Or William Walker, in *The Star*: "In his 13 years as an MPP, Swart's honesty and integrity were unquestioned at Queen's Park." And the Hamilton Spectator said of him: He "came through 33 years of politics with his integrity, wits and humor intact.... His record is a testament to prove that gentlemanly conduct, honesty, and humility still have a legitimate place in Canadian politics." And you know, the tributes went on when he retired and, I know, when he passed away.

Mel made an interesting observation himself that I thought captured what he was about. He said: "The highest challenge is not in the scientific world or the commercial world, or the world of productivity. Rather it is in the world of fairer distribution, of higher human values and of worldwide social responsibility to all of the human race." He went on to say, "I believe that politics can be the single greatest expression of a society's kindness, decency, and concern for human dignity."

So, as we pay tribute to him today, the leader of the New Democratic Party stated most appropriately, you could spend an hour talking about Mel Swart in this House. We're somewhat limited. We've steered over a bit the five-minute limit that's there, but he's a genuine loss. Let me tell you something that I think all of us know: He was a man very close to the family that you see here today, very close to Thelma. He and Thelma were a team. They were universally loved wherever they happened to go. Some people, when they leave this world, will leave this world having made a contribution. I can assure you that knowing him as I do personally, as so many here know him personally, the province of Ontario and the region of Niagara and indeed our world is a much better place because of our friend Mel Swart.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On behalf of the leader of the official opposition, John Tory, and the Ontario PC caucus, I have the privilege of paying tribute to our former colleague Mel Swart.

Melvin Leroy Swart served in this Legislature as a New Democrat from 1975 to 1988. Popular, as we've heard, with his constituents to the end, Mel's path that eventually led to the Ontario Legislature was not an easy one.

Beginning in 1950, when he was a member of the CCF, Mel campaigned in Welland for a seat in the federal House of Commons five times and suffered defeat each time. His determined persistence unabated, Mel campaigned provincially in 1967 and again in 1971 and was defeated both times.

Mel, the consummate Scotsman that he was, would compare his early political defeats to an episode in the life of Scottish King Robert the Bruce. Having suffered multiple military defeats, King Robert went into hiding from his enemies in a cave. As he cowered in fear, he noticed a spider attempting to climb up a candle nearby. The spider fell off the candle, but then continued to climb again. After the spider's eighth attempt to mount the candle, Robert the Bruce said out loud, "Give it up." But then on his ninth attempt, the spider reached his destination. Then, with tears in his eyes, Robert the Bruce said, "I have not yet been defeated eight times." And neither was Mel Swart. He was elected in 1975 in the provincial election and was re-elected in 1977, 1981, 1985 and again in 1987.

Throughout his tenure in this Legislature, Mel was renowned for his relentless hammering of the government of the day during question period on the issues he so passionately believed in.

On the issue of auto insurance, Mel earned the respect of his peers in all parties with his penetrating, sharp and often entertaining manner and mode of questioning.

He once confronted Premier David Peterson in this House and said, "You got my report on this last year with its several recommendations, and you should have listened to what it said—but you did not listen, did you? You refuse to listen, you don't want to listen, you're incapable of listening...." Indignant, Mel sat down, forcing himself to say no more, physically shaken, to loud applause even from the government benches.

In his riding of Welland-Thorold, Mel Swart was an effective advocate on behalf of his constituents. He was known as the "people's man" and with very good reason.

One of his constituents once said that he contacted Mel after hours with a problem that he needed resolved immediately. Rather than wait to the next working day, Mel invited the constituent to come to see him at his home to discuss the issue. Mel resolved the constituent's problem and turned him into an ardent personal supporter for the rest of his political career.

To the constituents of Welland-Thorold, Mel Swart was not only their representative whom they could turn to with their problems at any time, he was a true legend who constantly earned their admiration, their esteem and their votes.

During the by-election in 1988 that saw the election of his successor, Peter Kormos, Mel Swart was approached by a group of PC campaign workers who tried to win his vote for the PC candidate. Mel smiled and assured them that he would give very serious thought to whether he would vote PC or not—always a gentleman.

Mel Swart was truly the political mentor of the current member for Welland-Thorold and passed on to him his

passion for the issues he fought for throughout his political career.

A leading advocate for public auto insurance in Ontario in the 1980s, Mel was especially critical of the Rae government's decision to go back on its promise in this regard, and in 1994, Mel Swart publicly called on Bob Rae to resign as NDP leader. He was a truly a man whose principles transcended partisan politics.

In closing, the passing of Mel Swart fills us all with sadness and gives us pause to reflect on the greatness of this man who followed his political vision with whole-hearted dedication and single-minded purpose. He wanted to make a difference in the lives of people, especially his constituents, and he did. Just ask the people whose lives he personally touched.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of John Tory and the Ontario PC caucus, to extend my sincerest condolences to the members of the family of Mel Swart who are joining us in the House today.

Applause.

The Speaker: I extend the condolences of the House and assure the family we will see that the Hansard of this afternoon's proceedings is delivered to you.

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VISITOR

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): On a point of order, Speaker: I would like to introduce a guest in the east members' gallery today. Kerry Doughty is a resident of Peterborough and principal of Doughty Aggregates, who won a charitable lunch: Have Lunch with the MPP Day.

ANNIVERSARY OF VIMY RIDGE

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes in recognition of the 90th anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Next Monday—Easter Monday—we will commemorate an historic event that occurred on an Easter Monday 90 years ago. The battle of Vimy Ridge began at dawn on April 9, 1917.

History records Vimy Ridge as a critical Canadian military triumph, a remarkable victory that stoked national pride and helped form an emerging Canadian identity. Soldiers from coast to coast to coast fought shoulder to shoulder and captured more ground than on any previous British offensive in the Great War.

It was a turning point in the long struggle. While the war still had a year and a half to run, the battle of Vimy Ridge was the beginning of its end. The cost, as we all know, was high: Nearly 3,600 Canadians gave their lives, and another 7,000 were wounded. This sacrifice was part of Canada's enormous contribution to the First World

War. By war's end, Canada had nearly 620,000 personnel in uniform. This was a huge army for a nation of fewer than eight million people. More than one in 10 Canadians who fought in the war did not return. In all, 66,655 Canadian soldiers were killed, and of the nearly 173,000 who sustained injuries, many never recovered.

Vimy Ridge was the scene of many acts of gallantry. One of those gallant soldiers was Lance Sergeant Ellis Welwood Sifton, one of four winners of the Victoria Cross at Vimy Ridge. Sergeant Sifton was a farmer from Wallacetown, Ontario, who enlisted in 1914 at the age of 23. He perished in an attack on enemy trenches, but only after he had single-handedly charged a machine gun that was inflicting heavy casualties, took the gun out of action and then held off the advancing Germans until his company occupied the position. As his Victoria Cross citation reads, "His conspicuous valour undoubtedly saved many lives and contributed largely to the success of the operation."

While the troops of the Canadian corps were skilled in warfare, their dreams were of peace. As the inscription on monuments across this country reads, "They died that we might live." Unfortunately, the Great War did not turn out to be the war to end all wars. Many of its ideals are still to be achieved. We are still trying to make the world safer for democracy.

In 1936, the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France was unveiled. It has come to symbolize Canada's commitment to peace in the world and our stand for freedom and democracy. It proclaims from a past era the principles we still revere today.

Next Monday, the newly restored Vimy memorial will be dedicated during a ceremony of remembrance overseas. It will be a fitting tribute to what was achieved there. The Vimy anniversary will also be marked by an event at the National War Memorial in Ottawa and by a ceremony of remembrance on the front lawn of the Ontario Legislature.

I believe it is especially important for our younger generation to witness these ceremonies and heed their message. It is heartening that 5,000 Canadian students are planning to make the trip to France for the activities there. We recall the words from *In Flanders Fields*: "To you, from failing hands we throw / The torch; be yours to hold it high." Let us all, young and old, take up the challenge of those who sacrificed so much on our behalf, and always cherish and live by the ideals that are their bequest to us.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm pleased to rise and speak on behalf of my leader, John Tory, and the Progressive Conservative caucus as we commemorate the 90th anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge.

Once a year, we are called upon as individuals to proudly wear our poppies and reflect upon the significance of Remembrance Day, of which the battle of Vimy Ridge is a part. Once a year, we are reminded that our freedom and our peace can never be taken for granted. Indeed, over the last 100 years, thousands of

brave and courageous Canadians have left family, home and country and made huge sacrifices to give us that freedom and that peace. However, each year there is a growing concern that these courageous individuals who valiantly fought and paid the supreme sacrifice may be forgotten. Indeed, I remember that last November, when I spoke at the cenotaph, I addressed the need to pass the torch to our children and our grandchildren so that we would never forget these courageous individuals. Thus, I was thrilled to learn, as were many others, about the 3,600 Canadian high school students who would be travelling to France to take part in the 90th anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge.

As a former history teacher, I am overjoyed that these students will have the opportunity to be part of history, since not only are they travelling to Vimy, but each one of these students will represent one of the 3,600 soldiers who lost their lives in this battle. On April 9, each student will stand proudly in front of the leaders of Canada, Britain and France. Each one will wear a replica World War I Canadian uniform shirt bearing the name of a soldier who died at Vimy. This experience will be a significant and emotional event for these young people. Their excitement was obvious this week as we watched on TV as they were preparing for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be a part of history.

But what is the history of Vimy Ridge? Why is this assault on Vimy Ridge on April 9, 1917, such a memorable moment in Canadian history? It was on that day, after months of planning and a week of relentless bombardment, that the Canadians launched their daring attack on this ridge in northern France. It was the strongest-held position by the Germans on the Western Front, and they had already withstood British and French attacks. Now it was Canada's turn on this Easter Monday, and their four-day assault succeeded in taking the ridge.

This epic battle was key in the development of our great country. It solidified Canada's presence on the world stage. It signified a coming of age for our country, and it helped to forge our own national identity. I was informed by the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford that his grandfather, Herbert Jacob Miller, was one of the participants.

Just as the Canadian troops began the assault on the ridge 90 years ago, on Easter Monday, Prime Minister Stephen Harper will join Queen Elizabeth, the French Prime Minister and an expected crowd of 20,000 people, including some 7,500 Canadians, in a commemorative ceremony on the ridge this Easter Monday.

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This ceremony will mark the 90th anniversary of the battle and the rededication of the recently restored Vimy monument, which was first unveiled in 1936 to pay tribute to the valour and the sacrifices of Canadian soldiers who fought, were wounded, and died in World War I.

Although the World War I veterans will not be there, as they were at the 1936 unveiling, 3,600 high school

students from across Canada will take their place as they represent the soldiers who lost their lives in the battle of Vimy Ridge—soldiers like Private Alfred Henry Libby of the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles, who actually lived only about 20 minutes away from this building with his wife May and worked as a peddler. He was killed in action on April 9, 1917, at the age of 22. He will be represented by Seana Baker, a 17-year-old grade 11 student from Whitby. Like the other students, she has extensively researched as much as she could so that she would know Private Libby a little better. She even got others to help her. She now says, “I have learned about my soldier, Private Libby. I feel like I actually knew him. He isn’t just a man who was born 100 years ago. He had a wife and a family. He had hopes and dreams. I will represent him with pride.”

It is this symbolic passing of the torch to these enthusiastic high school students from across Canada who are taking part in the 90th anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge that gives hope to people throughout Canada that those who served our country in past wars to give us freedom and peace will never, ever be forgotten, for these students, our future generation, have answered the call. They have accepted the torch, to hold it high, so that we will never forget.

To these students and others, I say thank you. Let us join them in remembering those who served this country so proudly.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): This Monday, April 9, is perhaps one of the most important dates in Canadian history. Many people today likely do not appreciate what Vimy Ridge stood for in the spring of 1917. In the very flat part of northern France and Belgium, it is a hill that jumps out of nowhere to a height of 450 feet, and whoever holds the hill dominates the landscape for miles around. The German army realized that in 1914, and it was one of the strategic points that they were determined to take so they could dominate the battlefield.

What is so incredible for Canadians is that the French had twice tried to take Vimy Ridge and failed and had something in the neighbourhood of 40,000 casualties in trying to do that. The British had tried to take Vimy Ridge and failed and had suffered thousands of casualties. The German army suffered something in the range of 80,000 casualties trying to hold Vimy Ridge.

The taking of Vimy Ridge is also significant because, as one historian put it, Canadians, when they went to the First World War, were regarded simply as British soldiers or, to put it in a less appreciative term, British colonial soldiers. As one historian put it, Canadians started up Vimy Ridge as mere colonial soldiers; when they emerged at the top, they emerged as Canadians. It was the first time that the four Canadian divisions fought together as the Canadian Corps. It was the first time that the battle was truly under the leadership of Canadian generals, and it was a very novel battle. Hard-rock miners from northern Ontario and Quebec and British Columbia were employed to dig tunnels so that the German army

wasn’t aware that, in fact, they were facing not just one division, but four divisions, because most of the Canadian soldiers were hidden underground.

For the first time, some science and some thought was brought to how artillery should be used. Before that, the British army had simply blasted away. The supervisor of artillery was a McGill scientist named Andrew McNaughton, and McNaughton, straight out of McGill University, had the foresight to steal three brilliant physicists from the British. The British army had ignored their invention of flash spotting and sound ranging techniques on how to use artillery. McNaughton put it to work, so that on the day the attack actually happened, 75% of the German guns had been destroyed by Canadian artillery.

There was also a breakthrough in terms of training. The British army’s attitude was that the men in the ranks should simply be told what to do and not given any responsibility. At Vimy Ridge, even corporals and privates were given the maps and shown the terrain and given the responsibility to make decisions. It was one of the first times that the attack was actually made by platoons working together, rather than simply sending waves of soldiers over the top.

So it was not just a celebration of the first victory for a British army in two and a half years. It was not just the taking of this dominating physical feature on the flat lands of northern France. It was not just that superior German divisions were defeated. It was so much of the innovation, so much of the thought, and the fact that in military terms, there were relatively few casualties.

About 3,500 Canadians were killed and another 7,000 were wounded. That is a heavy price to pay at any time. But in comparison to the losses of the British and the French and the Germans—German armies in earlier battles—it was enlightened soldiering.

The international press noticed it. A Paris newspaper called it “Canada’s Easter gift to France.” The New York Times—one of the few times that the New York Times actually noticed that Canada was in the war—said, “Well done, Canada.”

Canadians were not used to this sort of international recognition. It was something completely out of character. We were supposed to be treated just as British colonial soldiers. So, in many ways, historians say this was one of those places where Canadians came together for the first time as Canadians.

I think it’s especially appropriate that students now have the opportunity to learn some of this very significant history. I wish I could be there when these students actually see the Vimy Ridge memorial. It is a very haunting memorial. It is something that you see over and over again in your mind’s eye, after the first time you visit it. It’s very fitting that these students should have this opportunity.

I wish all Canadians had this opportunity to see the sacrifice that was made, to see the incredible preparation and work that was made by thoughtful generals who were concerned that they not lose literally tens of thousands of

soldiers in this battle. It was, in many ways, a turning point in the war. German soldiers who were captured said, "If you can take us off this hill, then we have indeed lost the war."

So I hope that those students who have the opportunity to make this journey will appreciate everything that's involved in the incredible sacrifice that was made.

The Speaker: I would ask that members and our guests stand for a moment of silence as we recognize the sacrifice of the Canadians at Vimy Ridge.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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VISITORS

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm sure all members of the assembly would want to join me in welcoming Ginny Levine, mother of Hayley Levine, to the chamber today. We had her father and grandmother here today. I think this completes the Levine clan. So, welcome.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to acknowledge the presence with us in the gallery today of guests John Huh, president, Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association; Dave Bryans, the president of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association; and a number of their colleagues.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the minister responsible for the lottery. For two weeks now, we've been trying to get to the bottom of the lottery scandal. We've been trying to find out who knew what and when they knew it. For two weeks, we have been stonewalled by your government as they continually try to cover up their involvement in this. Perhaps today you're going to enlighten us and provide some information. Will you tell us whether or not you plan to appoint an independent investigation so that we can finally see what went on in the Premier's office and your office with respect to the lottery scandal and the subsequent cover-up?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I disagree with the premise of the member's question. First of all, the allegations that the member makes are unsupported. But of course we have had an independent investigation. An independent officer of this Legislature, unbiased, non-partisan—unlike members of this legislative chamber—did do quite an extensive investigation, where he says on page 8 of his report—the Ombudsman:

"The special Ombudsman response team carried out the investigation. We received more than 400 complaints from members of the public after the probe was announced. In addition to Mr. Edmonds, 25 complainants were interviewed in detail, either face to face or by telephone.

"The investigative team interviewed 28 OLG staff and conducted telephone interviews with seven others."

The Ombudsman goes on to indicate the scope of his investigation. I understand that the members opposite have difficulty accepting the Ombudsman's findings, but in light of his conclusions—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Witmer: We accept the Ombudsman's findings. In fact, we're overjoyed that he uncovered this scandal. What we want now is the appointment of an independent investigation, because there's so much more that we do not know. We want to answer the questions about whether the Premier's office knew about that August meeting that Wilson Lee attended, about which he and his apparent spokesperson, Ben Chin, can't get their stories straight, so that we can answer the question as to whether or not anyone in the Premier's office knew about the October 29 meeting, attended by the Liberal campaign team—Don Guy, Warren Kinsella, Bob Lopinski and Jim Warren—so that we can finally answer the questions about why the minister didn't react to fix the problems at OLG, or at least ask some questions.

If there's no cover-up, if you have nothing to hide, why won't you appoint an independent—

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: This is the first time I've heard that the official opposition accepts the Ombudsman's report. So I know that the member accepts the Ombudsman at his word when he says, on page 68, "I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report"—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I hear them complaining now—"and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change."

In fact, the Ombudsman goes much further. He says, "I conclude that they"—the OLG—"put profits ahead of public service. I think there was a point, a crossroads, in 2002." I would note that this member was a member of the executive council of cabinet of the province of Ontario during that period. The Ombudsman goes on: "At that point, the OLG could have gone two ways. It could have said, 'We'll apply the law and take the measures to act diligently.' One month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the" Superior "Court didn't apply. Then it became a slippery slope."

I'm glad that the member has finally taken account of—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary?

Mrs. Witmer: I think it's important that you remember that the only reason you've done anything is in light of the CBC program. The OLG responded, as you know, to that report by downplaying its revelations. This is what it says on page 5 of the Ombudsman's report: "There are disturbing signs that the culture that led to the difficulties in the first place is not gone. It was not conscience or self-criticism that smartened the OLG up—it was a public relations nightmare, played out on the public airwaves despite its best efforts at suppression. A profound cultural shift has yet to occur."

So I would say to you, Minister, all we're seeing here is your attempt to cover up. You have the ability to clear the air by appointing an independent investigation. Will you today finally acknowledge and appoint an independent investigation—

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, I quite agree with the Ombudsman that the OLG did not treat the CBC allegations—rather tried to deal with it as a public relations exercise. I quite concur with the Ombudsman's finding. My determination was to get to the bottom of the matter. That's why I engaged board chair Michael Gough and why we brought in KPMG, I believe one of Canada's leading auditors, of the Progressive Conservative Party, to make recommendations. The Ombudsman indicates that that was the appropriate step. He indicates that his recommendations, taken together with KPMG's, will ensure that Ontarians will have full trust and confidence in their corporation.

I want to let the member know that 17 of the recommendations that were made by the Ombudsman and KPMG have already been implemented. Unfortunately, when it came to the corporate culture, it was nurtured in 2002 and earlier by the member opposite and her colleagues, but this government, this minister, my colleagues—we're not going to take the same approach and try to sweep these matters under the rug. We are taking action—

The Speaker: Thank you.

CONVENIENCE STORES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, the latest attempt by the Premier to shift the blame and deflect responsibility for the lottery scandal to the owners and operators of convenience stores was cowardly, it was offensive and insulting to the more than 10,000 business people who own and operate convenience stores in this province, and whom the Premier has referred to as untrustworthy.

In the gallery today are representatives of the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association and the Ontario Convenience Stores Association. They are deeply offended by the Premier's comments on Tuesday this week, when he stated that people working in convenience stores could not be trusted to sell beer and wine, as proven by the lottery scandal.

Will you do the honourable thing today and extend a public apology, on behalf of the Premier and on behalf of your government, to these hard-working people for their reckless comments made by the Premier?

1440

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As a former retailer myself, I have absolutely no difficulty whatsoever in this place, in the presence of those who are mentioned and indeed sending out from this place to all of those who are hard-working small business people in the province of Ontario, that we thank them for their dedication to enhancing the vitality of our province, and indeed the vitality of their families.

What's very, very clear is that it's only political muck-raking on the part of the honourable member that could seek to stir the pot on this basis. Of course, no blanket indictment was prepared, but indeed yesterday, if we look at the language offered by the Leader of the Opposition himself with respect to an alleged circumstance related to a \$12.5-million ticket, we find indeed that if there is anyone who has been up to that game at all in this Legislature, it's the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Klees: Why does it not surprise me that rather than extend an apology to these people, you continue to insist that you did nothing wrong or that the Premier did nothing wrong?

Here is the transcript of Dalton McGuinty's own words when asked why the responsibility for selling beer and wine in convenience stores would not be given to these people. I quote the Premier: "If you want a good reason why, it's a lot easier for us to ... maintain security with the LCBO and the Beer Store than to give power to thousands of convenience stores found on our street corners as was proven with this issue with the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp." In other words, according to the Premier, these people cannot be trusted.

I ask you one more time: Rather than paint all of the convenience store owners in this province as untrustworthy, will you stand in your place on behalf of the Premier and on behalf of your government and extend an apology to hard-working business people who—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I appreciate the clarity and the endorsement by the Progressive Conservative Party today in the Legislature for their support for beer and wine in corner stores. This is new policy, and we're interested to see it today.

But on the issue of quotes, let's read one: November—oh, you'll think this is silly. November 23, 2006, from John Tory: "Ontario should consider banning lottery retailers from buying tickets in light of mounting accusations that clerks are winning a disproportionate number of prizes."

I say with respect to individuals who work in a dedicated way on the front line in a retailing environment, which we know to be very, very challenging, that there are no blanket accusations made except by the Leader of the Opposition. We believe in and are grateful for the

dedicated work that small business people are doing in the province of Ontario. If there has been any accusation made about the underlying fundamental trust of these individuals, it has been by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Klees: I want to point out to the Deputy Premier that it was the Premier of Ontario who referred to convenience store owners as people who could not be trusted.

I want the Deputy Premier to listen to a call that I received but a few minutes ago: "Please ask if Mr. McGuinty slept well Tuesday night, because I did not." This is from the wife of a convenience store owner after hearing the remarks by Dalton McGuinty.

Regardless of how much you want to spin this, Deputy Premier, it was the Premier of this province who called into question the integrity of honest, hard-working people, more than 10,000 employers in this province. Will you not do the right thing and extend an apology on behalf of the Premier and on behalf of your government?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: To any honest and hard-working Ontarian who has, as a result of the muckraking of the opposition party, been misled, we make an apology. We acknowledge fully the hard work that is done on the part of those—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I don't like that word. You might want to rethink.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I will withdraw the use of the word "misled," Mr. Speaker, because the following quote, another from the esteemed John Tory, helps to make the point rather well to these gentlemen: "Is it more important to let those 140,000 people buy their tickets and have some of the revenue from that, or is it to maintain the integrity of the system? I think that integrity always comes first." John Tory, since November of last year, has said that lottery retailers should not be allowed the opportunity even to engage in the purchase of these tickets. He's the one who has underlined questions of integrity related to these very hard-working individuals.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock.

Mr. Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: John Tory trusts them to sell tickets—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Sit down. New question.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): This question is for the minister responsible for lotteries. Minister, earlier today you omitted two key facts when you appointed an interim chief executive officer for your scandal-plagued lottery corporation. You omitted that Michelle DiEmanuele is a former Liberal political staffer and you omitted that she has made generous financial contributions to the Dalton McGuinty 2003 election campaign. Minister, given the lottery corporation's scandal and given the McGuinty government's attempts

to cover up the scandal, will you order Ms. DiEmanuele before the government agencies committee so MPPs from all parties can ask her the questions that need to be asked?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader):

This is a new low in the House. The leader of the third party attacks an incredibly well-respected member of Ontario's public service. I must tell you that Ms. DiEmanuele has extensive executive experience and she brings integrity, honesty and strong work ethic to her new role. I am very supportive of the board's decision to install her as the interim CEO at Ontario Lottery and Gaming. She has a proven track record of improving accountability and transparency in the private sector and here in the public sector. Ms. DiEmanuele brings great experience and expertise, and the government and I are confident that she will be effective in overseeing the progress on implementing the Ombudsman's recommendations and KPMG's recommendations.

I do think that the member from Kenora–Rainy River should stand in his place and apologize to Ms. DiEmanuele, because she has an incredible reputation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, literally hundreds, if not thousands, of innocent Ontarians have been ripped off to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars because of insider lottery winning at the lottery corporation. Who did the McGuinty government bring in? They brought Warren Kinsella, insider Liberal fixer; they brought in Don Guy, the Premier's re-election chair; and they brought in Jim Warren, the Premier's former director of communications.

Now who do you want to bring in to run as the interim CEO? Somebody else who has partisan connections to the Liberal Party. If you care about those innocent people who are ripped off, if you have nothing to hide, if you've got nothing to cover up, will you at least allow the people of Ontario a transparent appointment process, have Ms. DiEmanuele come before the committee, and ask the questions that need to be asked and you refuse to answer?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I could spend all of question period talking about the characteristics and character of Ms. DiEmanuele in very glowing terms.

Between 1988 and 2001—I believe that covers the period when Mr. Hampton was Attorney General or Minister of National Resources—she worked in the cabinet office, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ministry of Citizenship, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of the Attorney General, and as an assistant deputy minister in the Ministry of Health. Of course, we lost her expertise when she went to Brookfield Properties as a vice-president and to CIBC between the period of 2001 and 2004. She is well-noted and well-regarded for her work there.

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We were very fortunate to have her come back into the Ontario public service in 2004 as the Deputy Minister of

Government Services. I know that my colleague Minister Phillips remarked to me that he feels that Ms. DiEmanuele is perhaps one of the most capable and able deputy ministers within the government. I agree with that assessment.

Mr. Hampton: This is the minister who, only a few short months ago, was telling us what a wonderful job Duncan Brown was doing.

Your Liberal Party insiders have had their fingers all over this. When it was first disclosed by the CBC, what was your first instinct? It was to call in dirty-tricks man Warren Kinsella, to call in the Premier's re-election chair, to call in the Premier's former director of communications, to try to spin a line to undermine the CBC story. Now when you've been caught once again, who are you bringing in as the interim CEO? Somebody who has partisan connections to the Liberal Party.

I'm simply saying to you that if you care about the people at all, if you care about the people who have been fleeced, have her come before the committee and answer the questions that you and your Premier refuse to answer to the people of Ontario.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I've only been a member of this place for 10 years, but that is one of the lowest moments that I've seen in this period of time.

I disagree with the premise of the question to begin with. I can tell you, and as the Ombudsman indicates in his report, that the action that was taken by myself was to direct the board chair to get to the bottom of the matter. That's why KPMG was brought in. That's why the Ombudsman, in his report, talks about the work that they did in order to provide some 40 recommendations so that Ontarians could have full trust and confidence in the lottery corporation.

Ms. DiEmanuele—because the board is supportive of her and knows the kind of work that she has done—will be instrumental and excellent in helping to implement the Ombudsman's and KPMG's recommendations so that Ontarians in this House and right across this province will have full trust and confidence that their corporation will be an excellent one, will change the culture that was developed by the third party, nurtured by—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

BRUCE NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Today's auditor's report on the Bruce nuclear boondoggle provides more proof that your addiction to private nuclear power is going to cost Ontario hydro ratepayers a lot of money. The real cost of electricity under your deal is 7.1 cents a kilowatt hour, as the Auditor General calculates and demonstrates. That means that hydro ratepayers will be paying 44% more than the going rate under your deal.

Minister, how do you justify forcing people to pay 44% more than the going rate? Is this another one of those deals where friends of the McGuinty government

do well and the ratepayers, the hydro bill payers of Ontario, pay the freight?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): As is always the case, the member opposite doesn't tell the whole story. It's not complete. Let me add the complete part of the story. The auditor did say that under certain circumstances that could happen, that might happen. In fact, what has actually happened since we signed the deal is that the price has been below the deal. The price is at 6.1 cents for the first 18 months. He forgot to mention that.

He also forgot to mention that the auditor acknowledges on page 8 of the report that the government achieved its objective; that is, to shift the risk of capital from the ratepayer to the corporation. This is a good deal for Ontario; it's a good deal for ratepayers.

Mr. Hampton: Here's the complete story, and the auditor lays it out in his report: announced price, \$63 a megawatt; additional reduction in annual lease payments—something you tried to slide in without mentioning it—\$2.48 a megawatt; pre-refurbishment subsidy, unit 3, \$1.73; subsidy for unit 4 energy, \$3.74; price with trade-offs incorporated, \$71.33 a megawatt. The Auditor General's figures do not lie. They're there in black and white.

My question again, Minister: Is this what the McGuinty government calls a good deal for all those people out there trying to pay their hydro bill? You're going to charge them 44% more than the going rate for electricity just so you can feed more private, profit-driven electricity into the system?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Again, I'll re-emphasize that the leader of the third party has used creative licence in interpreting what is essentially a good report, and I'll remind the leader of the third party that this government posted that contract when it was signed. Everything was fully disclosed at the time the deal was done.

I will remind the member opposite that the price has been called a fair price by outsiders. The auditor himself has said that this deal, in terms of shifting the significant risk associated with developing nuclear power and running nuclear power, has been moved away from the ratepayer.

This is a good deal for the ratepayers of Ontario, it is a good deal for Ontario, and this government is going to continue to ensure that we have a reliable, safe, clean supply of electricity now and into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The McGuinty government is only going to ensure that hydro ratepayers pay 44% more than the going rate for your botched privatization deal at Bruce Power. Some of the auditor's quotes are excellent. He says, "The ratepayer is required to share in paying for any overrun in the cost of steam generators that Bruce Power had planned to purchase months before it approached the province." They were going to pay for these anyway. That's an additional \$250 million that ratepayers are on the hook for.

Minister, do you know what this sounds like? This sounds like Bruce Power won the fixed lottery—fixed by the McGuinty government—and innocent hydro ratepayers are going to pay for it over and over again. How do you call that protecting the hydro ratepayers, the hydro consumers of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Let's read what else the auditor said, clear and concise on page 8: "Provisions were negotiated that successfully transferred most of the ongoing operating risks of Bruce limited partnership."

I'll remind the member opposite that on his watch, hydro prices went up 40%. I'll also remind the member opposite that the price of electricity in Ontario is lower today than the day this government took office. By the way, what do you have against the 3,000 people in Ontario who are working on this project? Why don't you speak up for their jobs? Why don't you do that?

This deal ensures a clean, reliable, renewable supply of electricity today and into the future. We are continuing to move with prudence and responsibility to protect Ontarians today and into the future.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the minister responsible for the lottery. For several days, now, we've stood in this House and asked you to come clean about what you and the Premier knew and when you knew it. Your repeated refusal to answer strongly suggests that your government is engaged in a cover-up. As Murray Campbell writes in today's *Globe and Mail*, "It's too patronizing for words. The performance by Mr. McGuinty and his minister suggests they care more about spinning their way out of the OLG controversy than they do about the people who were defrauded of jackpots after the lottery corporation knew the CBC had it in its sights."

Minister, why don't you just announce today that you're appointing an independent investigation into what the Premier's office and the minister's office knew and when they knew it?

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Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Members can quote members of the media. I would suggest to the member for Whitby-Ajax where Mr. Campbell points out in his article: "The opposition don't have much evidence to back up their contention that the government knew of the irregularities before a CBC program...."

Of course, the Ombudsman, an independent officer of this Legislature, did comment on the critical time when I believe the member's husband sat at the cabinet table and looked the other way and swept this matter under the rug. The Ombudsman said that 2002 was the crossroads: "At that point, the OLG could have gone in one of two ways. It could have said, 'We'll apply the law and take the measures to act diligently.' One month later Bob

Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the" Superior "Court ... didn't apply ... then it became a slippery slope."

This member and members of her family, of her party, sat back and did nothing and put these matters away in a closet. That's not the way this government will treat it. As the Ombudsman says—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elliott: Dodge and deflect, dither and deny. That's what this minister is doing. We need an independent investigation, because regardless of what the OPP and the Toronto police are doing, nobody is looking at what went on in the Premier's office and in the minister's office.

The people of Ontario know something isn't right when the Liberal campaign team of Don Guy, Jim Warren, Warren Kinsella and Bob Lopinski gathered on a Sunday in October to devise ways to cover this up. Why doesn't the minister just come clean, truly take to heart the notions of integrity, accountability and responsibility and appoint an independent investigation so that we can truly get to the bottom of this?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Taking responsibility means rolling up your sleeves and implementing the recommendations of the Ombudsman, not ignoring them the way that previous governments did. I trust the Ombudsman, an independent, non-biased, non-partisan officer of this Legislature. I understand the members opposite. Even members on this side of the House have their own partisan perspective.

Unlike the member opposite, I trust the Ontario Provincial Police, to whom I've asked that all materials be referred. They have subsequently decided to call in the Toronto Police Service to review them. I trust that they are the appropriate ones to get to the bottom of these matters, to conduct the appropriate review and to take the appropriate next step.

I guess the questions for the member opposite are, why does she not have trust in the OPP, why doesn't she believe the Ombudsman, why doesn't she have confidence? I believe the reason is that she knows she and her colleagues who were here at the time will be found to have done nothing, to have swept these matters—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Last night at the Ontario Mining Association function, you were waxing eloquent about how the McGuinty government believes in consultation with the mining industry. Just a couple of short weeks ago, the McGuinty government increased the royalty on diamond mines from 5% to 13%. Can you tell people across northern Ontario what consultations there were with the diamond miners before you tripled the royalty rate?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I don't know that the member of the third party and I were at the same reception, but I was at a reception where a whole bunch of mining companies were celebrating the facts of the mining industry. Let's go through them for a little while. I want to quote right from the document they gave out to members who were interested enough. We talked about Canadian mineral production. Ontario's share is 28%, higher than any other jurisdiction in Canada. Let's talk about value of minerals produced in Ontario: Nickel is 64% of the Canadian total, Canadian ranking, 1; gold, 60%, Canadian ranking, 1; platinum group, 85%, Canadian ranking, 1; cobalt, 62%, Canadian ranking, 1.

What were we celebrating last night? We were celebrating the success of a government that cares about mining—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: I'm not sure—maybe the minister wasn't there when the diamond mining spokesperson got up, because he said, after you waxed eloquent about consultation, that there had been no consultation—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. It won't surprise anyone to know that I'm having great difficulty hearing people place and respond to questions. I'm sure that would be the case for many of the members here. It would be wise, I think, to provide some sense of decorum for the rest of the afternoon, if not longer.

Leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: Maybe the minister didn't hear the spokesperson for the diamond mining sector say that there had been no consultation. So I want to ask the minister this: After you waxed eloquent last night about consultation, can you tell the First Nations of Ontario how much consultation you had with them before you tripled the royalty rate on diamond mining?

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: I have to say that we also celebrated the wonderful understanding of the McGuinty government when it comes to mining tax. First of all, we mourned, of course, the fact that between 1990 and 1995, the standard mining tax rate was 20%. We of course mourned the fact that while the NDP were in power, 13 mines closed and six metal mills closed. But then we celebrated the fact that the standard mining tax in Ontario is now half of what their tax was, at 10%, and that we have the distinction of opening more new mines in this jurisdiction than anywhere else in Ontario. And we celebrated the fact that next year, we will have another banner year in mining because we and the miners work jointly.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): You're a piece of work, buddy.

The Speaker: Minister of Finance, that's not helpful. *Interjections.*

The Speaker: I can wait. New question?

SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

FONDS POUR SPORTS ET LOISIRS

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. Minister, last week you came to my riding to announce \$3 million in funding for the city of Clarence-Rockland's new culture and recreation project. Let me tell you that the city of Clarence-Rockland is very pleased that the McGuinty government made this investment. When this recreation complex is completed, local residents will be able to stay active in their own community instead of making the long drive to Ottawa. Minister, why has this government made a commitment to fund local sports and recreation infrastructure projects?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Let me begin by thanking the honourable member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, one of the great advocates for eastern Ontario, who delivers for his community.

I was pleased to be there with a \$3-million contribution from this government to the good people of Clarence-Rockland, because they had their act together. They worked hard; they informed the ministry; they had not-for-profit support through the Optimist Club and the local municipality. But who was missing in that equation? They had the not-for-profit sector, the community fundraising, the local municipality, the province of Ontario—the federal government. Our famous hockey-dad Prime Minister has still not come up with a stand-alone sport and recreation infrastructure program. But Premier McGuinty has, and I was pleased that that \$3 million is going to good use in Clarence-Rockland.

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M. Lalonde: Monsieur le ministre, encore une fois merci pour cet investissement dans ma communauté. Je sais que les gens de Clarence-Rockland et des communautés environnantes apprécient la vision du gouvernement McGuinty et son engagement à créer des Ontariens et Ontariennes en bonne santé.

The total cost of the Clarence-Rockland recreation complex is \$18.5 million. While your investment is a big step forward, the city is working hard on fundraising but will need more funds to complete the project. Minister, are there any other programs available to help keep Ontarians healthy by using preventive measures such as the Clarence-Rockland project, making it easy for Ontarians across the province to have access to such recreational projects?

Hon. Mr. Watson: Thanks to Minister Greg Sorbara and our government, we have invested over \$70 million in sport and recreation infrastructure, because we know that there is a huge deficit. Parks and Recreation Ontario have estimated a \$5-billion deficit dealing with outdated and dilapidated arenas and swimming pools and com-

munity centres. I'm pleased that our government has come to the table. I'm pleased that when these investments are made, we see an increase in those individuals who are coming forward to take part in sport and recreation opportunities.

My friend in Peterborough, the member for Peterborough, Jeff Leal, was able to secure \$3 million for their Y project. What happened? They had a 108-year-old Y. When the new one opened, they went from 3,500 members to over 7,500 members. Build it and they will come, because these kinds of investments mean a lot to small communities throughout the province of Ontario.

Every single sports minister in Canada has continuously asked the federal government to come to the table to create a sport and recreation infrastructure fund. We're still waiting, but while we're waiting, the McGuinty government is delivering.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the minister responsible for the lotteries. Minister, yesterday we asked the Premier about your government's cover-up of the lottery scandal. We asked specifically about a meeting in August 2006, attended by your chief of staff, Wilson Lee, in which he is reported to have said that the Premier's office saw nothing of the scandal. Mr. Lee's spokesperson, Ben Chin, says it never happened, no recollections—shades of Mr. Lafleur at the Gomery inquiry saying, "I don't remember" to every question. But Wilson Lee said that it may have happened. The Premier wouldn't answer. Minister, could you give us a straight answer today? Did that meeting happen?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Earlier a member of your caucus raised Mr. Campbell, the columnist for the Globe and Mail. He went on, by the way, to say that the opposition doesn't "have much evidence to back up their contention ... or that it somehow conspired with the lottery corporation to limit the damage." These kinds of innuendo and unsubstantiated allegations are below this member and below his party.

In fact, what I have been doing is what the Ombudsman has indicated should be done, which is, in order to restore public trust and confidence, to implement the recommendations that he made, starting with, just after the CBC raised the matter on the program the Fifth Estate, calling in KPMG, your party's own auditor, to get to the bottom of the matter and to make recommendations as to the security procedures that ought to be in place so that the public could have full trust and confidence. Those are the responsible actions. This member, too, once sat at the cabinet table and, I can only conclude from the way he and his colleagues have dealt with this, looked the other way, slid these matters under the rug—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hardeman: Dodge and deflect, dither and deny—that's all we're getting from this minister. Min-

ister, that wasn't the question. If this minister is really interested in the truth, if he's interested in protecting the public interest, if he's interested in restoring confidence in the lottery system, he'll come clean and appoint an independent investigation to look into the Premier's office, into your own office and into this scandal: when you knew it, what you knew and what you did about it when you found out. Minister, will you do that today?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Members of this government have decided to shine a light on these matters, where members opposite, when they were in government, chose to look the other way. Taking responsibility means rolling up your sleeves and dealing with the problem, as opposed to sweeping it under a rug.

I would hope that this member would have read the Ombudsman's report, where he says—

Mr. Hardeman: I did.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The member says he did. Well, on page 68, he says, "I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change."

What did happen previously, certainly under another government, I can't reply. I have asked members of the Conservative Party to stand in their place and hold an account for themselves. I've asked them to apologize to Bob Edmonds for the way he was treated. I have apologized. Unfortunately, members opposite will never have that opportunity, and I think that the Edmonds family is the worse for it. It's regrettable that members opposite—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, yesterday the Environmental Review Tribunal threw cold water on your incineration agenda. It has given concerned citizens the green light to appeal the approvals given under your watch to Lafarge Canada to burn tires in Bath. The tribunal found that this incinerator is potentially hazardous to public health and the environment, and that's exactly—exactly—what community and environmental experts have been telling you for months.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We need the member for Oxford and the Attorney General to sit down.

Mr. Tabuns: Why did you let the interests of a multinational company trump protecting Ontario families and the environment?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): As my friend knows well, the matter is now obviously before the Environmental Review Tribunal, and it would be inappropriate for me to comment on that specific matter.

My number one priority as Minister of the Environment is to ensure the health and safety of Ontarians. We

are guided by a public discourse and guided by good science. The hearing before the Environmental Review Tribunal will provide another opportunity for the community to come together to bring that good science forward, and I look forward to the matter being before the ERT so that we can all move forward, being guided by the best science that's available.

Mr. Tabuns: The minister talks about protecting public safety, but she did not require Lafarge Canada's tire incinerator to undergo an environmental assessment. She forced the citizens to put out money and time to protect themselves. Two weeks ago, you changed the rules so you could fast-track incineration in this province so people could get around the environmental assessment process. The decision that was handed down by the Environmental Review Tribunal yesterday signals that these projects must be scrutinized, that those claims that they're safe are spin and not substance.

Minister, when can Ontarians count on you to actually start protecting the air they breathe from incineration?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I know my friend wants to play politics with many diverse issues, put them in a pot. I know that you have an absolute unwillingness to examine any type of new technology. That's why the rules have been put forth: 14 mandatory steps, many opportunities for public consultation. Those are the issues that we talked about last June when we said we would help get to a faster yes or a faster no and make sure that the environmental assessment process did protect Ontarians.

The matter now before the Environmental Review Tribunal is with respect to a certificate of approval, and I know that you know that those matters are very distinct. But in all of those issues, the guiding principle is to be guided by good science, to have public consultation, to meet with the community—which I have done in all of these instances—and to make sure that together as a jurisdiction we progress into the 21st century making sure that every citizen in Ontario is protected, and that's what I'm committed to doing.

1520

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, I know that our government has committed to moving forward with the closure of the last three remaining institutions in Ontario for adults with developmental disabilities. I think it's great that we're transforming Ontario's developmental services system to support the full inclusion of Ontarians with developmental disabilities in all aspects of our society.

It is important, though, that these individuals have the community supports they need before they become integrated into the community. Minister, can you tell me how our government is building these community supports?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for franco-

phone affairs): First of all, let me thank the member from Northumberland, and I would also like to recognize his continued advocacy for the developmentally disabled.

Our government is building stronger, more inclusive communities for all Ontarians, including those with a developmental disability. We continue to hear success stories of former facility residents who have transitioned into the community. This transition can only be successful if the necessary community supports are in place, which is why the McGuinty government has made unprecedented investments in the sector.

In 2006, we made the largest one-year investment in developmental services in Ontario's history, \$84 million, which brought our government's four-year commitment to a record \$276 million. In our 2007 budget, we have invested an additional \$200 million. This totals more than \$500 million in new funding in—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rinaldi: Thank you for your answer, Minister. I've met with constituents in my riding, folks like Campbellford-Brighton Community Living, who were concerned about this issue, and they would like to know what all of this new funding will mean. It is clear that the McGuinty government has increased its financial commitment, but can you please explain how exactly this increased funding will translate into a better quality of life for the developmentally disabled?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: The additional \$200-million investment announced in our 2007 budget will help agencies sustain and enhance residential and community services, and increase supports to families caring for family members with developmental disabilities at home. Agencies can also use this money to address salary and other operating costs as they continue to provide high-quality community-based supports. All of our new funding will enhance agency sustainability, and, as a result, individuals and their families will be better supported. Our investments will also fund nearly 1,000 new residential spaces for residents of the three facilities and provide additional funding for our special services at home program.

I would also like to mention that our 2007 budget provides an additional \$7 million, on top of the \$200 million I mentioned, in capital funding for community agencies serving people with developmental disabilities.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): My question is for the minister of lotteries. We want to give the minister one more chance to put an end to his four years of stonewalling, because we're fair-minded on this side. We want to see an end to the cover-up happening over at OLG.

You'll appreciate that when the Liberal campaign team of Don Guy, Jim Warren, Warren Kinsella and Bob Lopinski meet on a Sunday in October, it will raise

eyebrows. It will get people wondering what kind of cover-up is being cooked up. But so far we've been stonewalled in trying to find out what went on in this meeting, proof again that we need an independent investigation. Will the minister today, before we go away on a four-day break, call an independent investigation so we can find out what went on and when it went on with respect to this lottery scandal and the cover-up?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Once again the members opposite engage in speculation and unsupported allegations. In fact, we've had an independent investigation from the Ombudsman. I know the members opposite don't like the fact that the Ombudsman indicated that 2002 was the crossroads, when many of them either sat in cabinet, had loved ones, or worked for members opposite at that time. I can appreciate that.

But after the Ombudsman made his report known back a couple of weeks ago, I instructed that all of the materials be given over to the Ontario Provincial Police for their review. I hope the member opposite isn't claiming that our police are not independent, because they certainly are. I know that members opposite have often asked this government to direct the police into investigating or into taking other kinds of actions, but that's not the responsible approach. I have trust and confidence in the lawful authorities, in the police in this province to conduct the proper review—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. MacLeod: All I can say to that is, if he were half the minister that half of these people were when they were in government, he would be having an investigation today. And if he were half the woman that his mother was, he'd resign.

But I digress. He can continue, he can dodge, he can deflect, he can dither and he can deny, but that's all the minister is doing.

Don Guy, Jim Warren, Warren Kinsella, Bob Lopinski—I'm not going to kid you—all of them in them same room for a meeting to talk about the lottery scandal and the cover-up looks bad. The minister is refusing to grant this simple request, a request being made not only by the members of the official opposition; a request that would prove a commitment to transparency and accountability, something that party campaigned on four years ago when it was running for office.

People are right to think that he's got something to hide. Will he come clean today? Why doesn't he prove he's got nothing to hide by calling today for an independent investigation into OLG?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I must say to the member for Nepean—Carleton that the Ombudsman disagrees with you. He says, "I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change."

This member and her colleagues who served on the executive council of government—I would note the

member for Erie—Lincoln, a former minister at the time responsible for the OLG—in the opinion of the Ombudsman, looked the other way. They swept these matters under the carpet. They refused to roll up their sleeves and deal with the problem, and actually, in fact, nurtured this culture which the Ombudsman says must change. That's why I, and this government, have taken action. That's why 17 of the Ombudsman's and KPMG recommendations have been implemented; 25 more by the end of June. The other 18 are a work in progress and are ongoing.

I know that members opposite don't like to hear—

The Speaker: New question.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto—Danforth): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, while you're willing to give billions of dollars to the nuclear industry, you aren't helping ordinary Ontarians with upfront capital costs for their own home solar or wind power. But beyond that, Minister, you aren't giving people a break on property taxes.

Your answer to Max Woschnigg, a Guelph area resident who recently learned that he was going to be stuck with a \$3,000 increase in his property taxes because he put in a wind turbine—your comment: "We all pay property taxes."

Minister, why don't you take action to protect Ontarians who go green rather than having them penalized with higher property taxes?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): Again, the member opposite didn't finish what I said when I responded to that, and the property tax issue is one that is important. The Minister of Finance's responsibility for MPAC has indicated a willingness to look at those rules, and we're going to.

I'd also like to read a quote from somebody I know is a colleague and friend of the member opposite—Chris Winter of the Conservation Council of Ontario. Here's what Chris has to say: "Ontario's conservation movement is starting to get the recognition it deserves. Buried in a traditional budget ... are ... announcements that we have been pressing for ... including consumer subsidies and support for community outreach programs."

This government is a leader in conservation and renewable power. We are defending those interests. Your party, your government closed down conservation. We'll show you how it's done, and we're getting it done.

Mr. Tabuns: Minister, telling us that you're putting these considerations under review tells us that it's going into the never-never. You don't seem to have any difficulty saying that you're going to go ahead putting all of this money into nuclear power. When it comes to actually dealing with obstacles that people are confronting today, when they make decisions about green power, it's off into the never-never.

1530

My constituents in Toronto—Danforth who are investing in green power are worried that they're going to get

hit with property tax increases because they're doing the right thing. When is your government actually going to deal with this problem and make sure that there are not disincentives for investments in green power?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Let me quote from a couple of other eminent Canadians about what they have to say about this government's renewable energy program. Here's what Keith Stewart of the World Wildlife Fund of Canada says, speaking about our standard offer: "We love the idea. The small stuff adds up. This model should be taken right across North America." Your leader doesn't even like compact fluorescent light bulbs. Those are those light bulbs that save people energy. Let's see what he had to say: "It's a good PR gimmick but it's not going to give you energy conservation."

Let's talk about the record. What happened? Let's see. Power saver month, which encouraged customers to purchase energy-efficient products in the early 1990s: What happened to that project? It was cancelled. The refrigerator cashback program in the early 1990s under the NDP: What happened to that program? Cancelled. Energy-efficient lighting in the early 1990s under the Bob Rae government: What happened? Cancelled.

That party doesn't understand energy, it doesn't understand the environment and it doesn't understand conservation. This Premier and our government do, and we're fixing the mess they and our other predecessors—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Education. As I know you are very aware, Minister, one of the issues facing the Grand Erie District School Board is the decision as to whether to replace the original Brantford Collegiate Institute, BCI, or rehabilitate and retrofit the school.

As an educator in Brantford for over 25 years, I certainly understand and appreciate the attachment staff, students and the community have towards the schools they teach and learn in. The community at large has also got strong feelings about this issue. I have arranged an information sharing session between ministry staff and representatives of the BCI school community. I have also asked you, Minister—and I know you're responding to this—to contact the school board directly to clarify what's happening and why.

Minister, can you clarify for my constituents, and particularly those who are entrenched in this issue, the situation with respect to BCI and your role with the government and with the school board? I'd appreciate that.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Thank you to the member for his question and for his advocacy in Brant. My staff have contacted the school board. BCI was originally built in 1910. Early last year, the trustees established a committee to review the options for the future development of BCI. The options were

either the status quo, redevelop and renovate or build a new school.

The BCI committee of the whole gave tentative approval to renovate both the 1910 and 1963 wings and demolish and rebuild the rest of the school, with the project to begin in July 2007 and end in December 2008. I understand that the trustees had second thoughts about rebuilding on the current site after hearing how the 18-month construction schedule would affect students. Based on our information, trustees were also faced with a larger-than-expected estimate for the redevelopment of BCI.

Recently the trustees dropped plans to rebuilt BCI on Brant Avenue after they heard that land for a new school would be available within a year—or could be, depending on council selling the land.

I know the debate on the future of BCI is challenging for the Brant community. These are decisions the trustees have to make in their communities.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It was on my desk in Woodstock, and the constituents are coming in, signing it on a regular basis.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

I affix my signature as I agree with the petition.

TUITION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): I'm reading a petition from University of Toronto Students' Administrative Council:

"To Stop Tuition Fee Hikes and Improve Access and Quality In Post-Secondary Education

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government cancelled the tuition fee freeze after only two years and approved fee increases of up to 36% over the next four years; and

"Whereas tuition fees in Ontario have increased by more than four times the rate of inflation over the past 15 years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians oppose tuition fee increases and support greater public funding for colleges and universities; and

"Whereas improvements to student financial assistance are undermined by fee increases; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's recent increase to student loan limits is set to push student debt to approximately \$28,000 for a four-year program; and

"Whereas per-student investment in Ontario still lags significantly behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to stop tuition fee hikes and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"—reduce tuition fees to 2004 levels for all students in Ontario and implement an immediate tuition fee freeze;

"—increase public funding for post-secondary education to promote access and quality;

"—expand access to financial aid in Ontario, especially for part-time students; and

"—double the number of upfront, need-based grants for Ontario students."

I absolutely agree with this and affix my signature hereto.

GTA POOLING

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It is entitled, very clearly, "End GTA Pooling: Pass Ontario Budget. I'd certainly like to thank the staff and clients of Intercultural Neighbourhood Social Services for having collected the signatures. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the city of Mississauga faces a long-term labour shortage, resulting in some 60,000 more people commuting into the city of Mississauga than leave Mississauga to earn their living and support their families each and every day; and

"Whereas 10 years ago the Ontario government of that day introduced the concept of GTA pooling, whereby funds are taken from the municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto and channelled into the city of Toronto without benefit or accountability to the taxpayers of those fast-growing cities, which face big-city needs and issues of their own; and

"Whereas GTA pooling places an additional tax burden on the municipal property tax bases of some \$40 million each and every year to the city of Mississauga; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario in its 2007-08 budget proposes to completely eliminate GTA pooling during a seven-year span beginning in fiscal year 2007-08, and that as pooling is phased out, Ontario will take

responsibility for social assistance and social housing costs currently funded by GTA pooling;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties within the government of Ontario support the swift passage of the 2007-08 Ontario budget and ensure that its provisions ending GTA pooling are implemented."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition. I affix my signature and ask page Jacob to carry it for me.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to do with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare lab services. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the residents of the communities served by Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare ... wish to maintain current community lab services; and

"Whereas maintaining community lab services promotes physician retention and benefits family health teams; and

"Whereas the funding for community lab services is currently a strain on the operating budget of MAHC; and

"Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas the operating budget for MAHC needs to reflect the growing demand for services in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health increase the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to permit continued operation of community lab services."

I support this petition.

1540

GTA POOLING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a petition here. It says:

"End GTA Pooling: Pass Ontario Budget

"Whereas the city of Mississauga faces a long-term labour shortage, resulting in some 60,000 more people commuting into the city of Mississauga than leave Mississauga to earn their living and support their families each and every day; and

"Whereas 10 years ago the Ontario government of that day introduced the concept of GTA pooling, whereby funds are taken from the municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto and channelled into the city of Toronto without benefit or accountability to the taxpayers of those fast-growing cities, which face big-city needs and issues of their own; and

"Whereas GTA pooling places an additional tax burden on the municipal property tax bases of some \$40

million each and every year to the city of Mississauga; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario in its 2007-08 budget proposes to completely eliminate GTA pooling during a seven-year span beginning in fiscal year 2007-08, and that as pooling is phased out, Ontario will take responsibility for social assistance and social housing costs currently funded by GTA pooling;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties within the government of Ontario support the swift passage of the 2007-08 Ontario budget and ensure that its provisions ending GTA pooling are implemented."

I agree with this and affix my signature.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

"Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston."

I've signed this petition and, of course, I agree with it.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): I present a petition to the Ontario Legislature regarding regulating zoos to protect animals and communities:

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature hereto.

GTA POOLING

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): This petition is to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"End GTA Pooling: Pass Ontario Budget

"Whereas the city of Mississauga faces a long-term labour shortage, resulting in some 60,000 more people commuting into the city of Mississauga than leave Mississauga to earn their living and support their families each and every day; and

"Whereas 10 years ago the Ontario government of that day introduced the concept of GTA pooling, whereby funds are taken from the municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto and channelled into the city of Toronto without benefit or accountability to the taxpayers of those fast-growing cities, which face big-city needs and issues of their own; and

"Whereas GTA pooling places an additional tax burden on the municipal property tax bases of some \$40 million each and every year to the city of Mississauga; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario in its 2007-08 budget proposes to completely eliminate GTA pooling during a seven-year span beginning in the fiscal year 2007-08, and that, as pooling is phased out, Ontario will take responsibility for social assistance and social housing costs currently funded by GTA pooling;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties within the government of Ontario support the swift passage of the 2007-08 Ontario budget and ensure that its provisions ending GTA pooling are implemented."

I agree with the petitioners so I will put my signature on the petition.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

I wholly agree with the intent of this petition and I affix my name thereto. I will give it to Katrina.

GTA POOLING

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): A petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"End GTA Pooling: Pass Ontario Budget

"Whereas the city of Mississauga faces a long-term labour shortage, resulting in some 60,000 more people commuting into the city of Mississauga than leave Mississauga to earn their living and support their families each and every day; and

"Whereas 10 years ago the Ontario government of that day introduced the concept of GTA pooling, whereby funds are taken from the municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto and channelled into the city of Toronto without benefit or accountability to the taxpayers of those fast-growing cities, which face big-city needs and issues of their own; and

"Whereas GTA pooling places an additional tax burden on the municipal property tax bases of some \$40 million each and every year to the city of Mississauga; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario in its 2007-08 budget proposes to completely eliminate GTA pooling during a seven-year span beginning in fiscal year 2007-08, and that as pooling is phased out, Ontario will take responsibility for social assistance and social housing costs currently funded by GTA pooling;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties within the government of Ontario support the swift passage of the 2007-08 Ontario budget and ensure that its provisions ending GTA pooling are implemented."

I'm going to sign this and pass it on to page Craig.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions of dollars in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

I have signed that petition.

GTA POOLING

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): A petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly to end GTA pooling and pass the Ontario budget:

"Whereas the city of Mississauga faces a long-term labour shortage, resulting in some 60,000 more people commuting into the city of Mississauga than leaving Mississauga to earn their living and support their families each and every day; and

"Whereas 10 years ago the Ontario government of that day introduced the concept of GTA pooling, whereby funds are taken from the municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto and channelled into the city of Toronto without benefit or accountability to the taxpayers of those fast-growing cities, which face big-city needs and issues of their own; and

"Whereas GTA pooling places an additional tax burden on the municipal property tax bases of some \$40 million each and every year to the city of Mississauga; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario in its 2007-08 budget proposes to completely eliminate GTA pooling during a seven-year span beginning in fiscal year 2007-08, and that, as pooling is phased out, Ontario will take responsibility for social assistance and social housing costs currently funded by GTA pooling;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties within the government of Ontario support the swift passage of the 2007-08 Ontario budget and ensure that its provisions ending GTA pooling are implemented."

I agree and sign my name to this petition.

1550

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to standing order 55, if I might, I'd like to rise to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On Tuesday, April 10, 2007, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 187, the budget bill; in the evening, third reading of Bill 155, the referendum act.

On Wednesday, April 11, 2007, in the afternoon, NDP opposition day; in the evening, second reading of Bill 187, the budget bill.

On Thursday, April 12, 2007, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 198, Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Thank you. Perhaps you could provide a copy of that to the Clerk, please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

DEFERRAL OF VOTES

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to allow for the deferral of any recorded divisions on the budget motion until Tuesday, April 10, 2007, at deferred votes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Is there unanimous consent? It's carried.

2007 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 27, 2007, on the amendment to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I am certainly pleased to join the debate regarding the 2007 budget. I would begin by saying that we have a budget here, the McGuinty Liberal budget, where we saw a spending spree of some \$22 billion, but as far as the results were concerned the people in the province of Ontario certainly did not see better results.

I'm going to focus my remarks primarily on the lack of results in the area of health care. Ontarians deserve better. They are forced to pay, every year now, a health tax. It's a tax that was implemented in the first McGuinty Liberal budget. It's a tax that in some cases amounts to almost an additional \$1,000 per year, and it's a tax that Premier McGuinty indicated in 2003, during the election campaign, he wasn't going to introduce. In fact, he said nightly, daily—every hour of every day, it seemed, he was on TV telling people, "I won't raise your taxes and I'm not going to lower them either." Then, in the very first budget, we saw the introduction of the health tax and we also had the largest tax increase in the history of this province. Certainly people are paying more when it comes to health care but they're not seeing the results that they were promised or that they deserve.

I want to begin with emergency departments. There was a promise made by this government in 2003, an election promise. That promise by the McGuinty Liberals was to take the pressure off our hospitals in order that

Ontarians would not have to wait long hours in overcrowded emergency rooms for necessary care. Despite the fact that they made this promise, we haven't seen much progress. They said this in 2003. They totally ignored the province until finally, last fall, they were forced to make some sort of response. In the meantime, we have had emergency rooms throughout the province overcrowded, unable to respond to the needs of their communities. In fact, people have been turned away from the emergency rooms, and emergency rooms have had to close down because they haven't had enough physicians to address the needs of patients.

Emergency room overcrowding has caused problems that go far beyond the emergency rooms. We have also seen that part of the reason emergency rooms are overcrowded is because we don't have enough long-term-care beds to move people to, who need that type of care. We don't have the home care services that people need; we don't have the supportive housing that people need. We also don't have the acute care beds that people need.

We have not seen the relief that was promised in 2003 by Premier McGuinty when he said, "We will take pressure off our hospitals so" Ontarians "will not have to wait long hours in overcrowded emergency rooms for necessary care." In fact, he was totally unresponsive when the emergency room doctors came here. They pleaded, they begged for additional resources to help deal with the situation. They even travelled here to Queen's Park. At that time, the Minister of Health said, "Do you know what? You people don't really count. You don't represent the doctors in the province of Ontario. There's no big problem." Well, there is a big problem.

In fact, the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians said that there are five million Ontarians who visit our emergency departments on an annual basis. They go on to say that for many of these folks, it is an entirely unsatisfactory experience. They have to wait for an unconscionable length of time in crowded, uncomfortable waiting rooms for routine emergency care. They also have indicated, and we know first-hand, that many people who come into emergency rooms are left to languish on stretchers in corridors for long periods of time. And you know, by doing so, these individuals who need care are in pain and are robbed of their dignity while they wait in those corridors for a bed to become available. This was recorded in the *Toronto Sun* in a letter to the editor in November 2005.

I think it's important to recognize that when it comes to health care, when it comes to responding to the promise Premier McGuinty made to make sure that people have the services they need and are taken out of overcrowded emergency rooms, that simply hasn't happened. It hasn't happened in this budget, and it hadn't happened before the budget. So people are not seeing better health care in Ontario. In fact, we seem to have a very dysfunctional system, if you take a look at different hospitals throughout the province, where from time to time there are not enough beds to accommodate those in emergency rooms or there aren't enough human resour-

ces, whether it's nurses or doctors. We know that the wait times are excessive, and that problem has not been dealt with.

This budget also failed to respond to the concerns of the long-term-care sector. This is primarily older people who need assisted living in long-term-care homes. This government, despite the promises they have made, has virtually ignored the needs of some of our most vulnerable citizens in the province of Ontario. They promised \$6,000 to each resident for an additional 20 minutes of care, and they have not delivered. I'm going to say something about that just a little bit later, but where else they have failed Ontarians is in the provision of new long-term-care beds. Part of the problem in the emergency rooms is created by the fact that people in emergency rooms cannot be accommodated in acute care beds because those beds are being occupied by people who more appropriately belong in long-term-care residences and there are simply no rooms for them. We need to keep in mind that that is a very, very serious problem and it needs to be addressed.

1600

If we take a look in the Quinte region alone, there are about 967 people on a wait list for long-term-care beds. Yet what did this budget provide? No new beds. The only beds that were announced were the 1,750 long-term-care beds that had already been announced in the fall, and that was only after the situation became desperate. But there is no plan for the further construction of new long-term-care beds. Furthermore, these 1,750 beds, which are really a drop in the bucket when you consider that Quinte alone has a wait list of 967 for long-term-care beds, are not going to become available until 2009. So there is no plan whatsoever to address the needs of our older residents who need these beds. I'll tell you, this re-announcement of only 1,750 beds offers little comfort to families in the province of Ontario.

This government also, in its platform, promised to build a seniors strategy that guaranteed that seniors would be treated with respect and dignity. I've made reference to the fact that we don't have enough long-term-care beds, so obviously we aren't guaranteeing that seniors are going to be treated with respect and dignity. Some of them are, unfortunately, languishing in acute care beds in hospitals, which certainly is not where they should more appropriately be accommodated. They should be in the more home-like environment of long-term-care residences.

The government also promised, as they were talking about respect and dignity, that they were going to provide seniors with an additional \$6,000 in order that they could be provided with 20 minutes of additional care. But after four budgets, that promise to our seniors has been broken. What we have instead is money provided in this budget turning into a mere one minute of additional care per resident per day—about 50 cents more per resident per day. I can tell you that the people in the long-term-care sector were disappointed. In fact, that would be an understatement. The associations were disappointed, the

residents were disappointed, their families were disappointed, their caregivers were disappointed and those who own and operate these homes were extremely disappointed, including in my own community, where our regional municipality had asked for additional funding and the additional level of care.

I want to read what the two organizations that represent the 75,000 long-term-care residents had to say about the 2007 McGuinty Liberal budget. These remarks, by the way, are from Donna Rubin, CEO of the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors: "For long-term care, the cupboard is bare.

"Unless the Liberals have a sudden conversion on the way to the polls on October 10, they will have to explain another broken promise—a promise made to long-term-care residents and their families across this province....

"In the leadup to the last election, the Liberals identified increased funding for long-term care—funding that would go directly to improving the level of care of residents—as one of their top priorities. Today, they failed to keep their word. This is a huge disappointment, especially after the Liberals promised after coming to power that they would lead a revolution in long-term care.... Homes have been given about 50 cents a day more to hire new nurses, but we needed over \$2 a day just to keep the ones we have. We will be laying off three nurses to hire one.... Sadly, this budget"—referring to the 2007 McGuinty Liberal budget—"will mean layoffs and service cuts."

Now we have another quote, from Karen Sullivan, executive director of the Ontario Long-Term Care Association, and she says:

"We feel that residents in long-term-care homes in the province in this budget have been forgotten.... The budget investment translates to 50 cents a resident a day, which is one minute of additional care. We were looking for 30 more minutes of care for our residents in this province; 50,000 people signed petitions over the last three weeks to say that's what was needed.... I think the message is that they have been forgotten and I think that's hugely very concerning for the 75,000 people who live in these homes and their families.... We were looking at \$300 million in additional funding and we got \$14 million.... With the one more minute of care funded in today's budget, staff will be run off their feet to meet basic care needs. The double standard of physical comfort and privacy between old and new homes will continue with no commitment to a capital renewal and retrofit program. Government has repeatedly said that more needs to be done in long-term care and care levels and capital renewal were described as budget issues when they were repeatedly raised just over a month ago during the public hearings on the new Long-Term Care Homes Act (Bill 140)."

This budget only delivered \$14 million. They didn't get the additional funding for personal care. But if you listen to Karen, there was also no plan for capital renewal in order that we could rebuild half of the long-term-care beds in this province, about 35,000 or 36,000, where we

still have people living in homes that are three- and four-bed wards and that don't have washrooms and are not wheelchair-accessible.

When we were in office, we built 20,000 new long-term-care beds to new 1998 design standards. We did renew and we did rebuild the oldest homes, the D homes, and we have 16,000 additional residents who now live in homes that meet 1998 design standards. But this government has refused to take any action. Certainly, they have not been responsive, and people are not getting better health care under the leadership of the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government. In fact, in some cases where we haven't had enough beds in the province of Ontario, like in Kingston General, they actually said that when there was a shortage—and I quote—they were going to be “forced to take the horrible step of charging long-term-care patients about \$800 a day if they don't accept a similar bed elsewhere in the province.”

So we do have some problems when it comes to long-term care. There are not more beds being built that are needed. There is no renewal plan for the B and C beds that would make all homes wheelchair-accessible and would allow all people to live in a one- to two-bed room with an ensuite bathroom. So this budget failed the long-term-care sector.

Also, if you take a look at nurses, this government has promised to add an additional 8,000 full-time nurses. Well, I can tell you, most recently an announcement was made offering new nurses only short-term, seven-and-a-half-month contracts. There is no guarantee of a full-time job. Again, I believe that the Liberals are not going to be able to keep their 2003 promise to hire 8,000 new full-time nurses, and that's disappointing. We need nurses in this province. We know that about 53% of the registered nurses employed in Ontario are over the age of 45. We need to retain those nurses; we need to have a plan to retain those nurses. Nurses are a critical and key component of the human resources within our health system, and we also know that nurses have an impact on increasing positive outcomes for patients. Again, this budget isn't going to help the need to recruit more nurses.

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This budget also, despite the new health tax, failed to address the doctor shortage crisis. We still have over one million people in this province without a family doctor. We know the situation is not getting better. In fact, in 2005, Ontario, for the first time in recent history, had a net loss of 14 doctors to other provinces, whereby provinces like BC and Alberta are gaining. We know that nearly 30% of Ontario medical grads leave the province within two years of finishing medical school. The other concern we have is that 20% of our doctors are over the age of 60. We need now to develop a plan to retain those doctors, or the one million people without a family doctor are going to increase. We also know that as of January 2007, under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, we have 136 underserved communities in this province. We have a huge issue when it comes to physician supply. Most of the initiatives where we've seen some improve-

ments are as a result of initiatives we undertook between 1995 and 2003. Recently, the College of Physicians and Surgeons indicated that under our watch, 1995 to 2003, the number of licences for international medical graduates increased by 130%. That is important, because we did work hard, and we are now seeing the result of some of those labours.

I'm going to conclude my comments by saying that despite the new health tax, despite the additional about \$2.5 billion, we are not seeing improvements when it comes to health care for people in the province of Ontario. We still have a crisis. We have a shortage of doctors. Wait times in the province for all procedures are not going down. Long-term-care people are not getting the additional money for front-line, hands-on services or additional new beds. I know that when we take a look at diagnostic equipment, we still don't have the PET. So this budget did not deliver better health results for people in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments. The Chair recognizes the member for York South–Weston.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): It's always a delight to be able to listen to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I can't say that I agree with her on many points, but it is good to listen to her wise words.

I do want to thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. Upon my election, she was kind enough to send me a very nice note, congratulating me on my victory. That certainly was a nice touch in welcoming me here to the House.

I listened to her comments closely and I was intrigued by what she said towards the end of her comments around foreign-trained medical professionals. It's my belief that we have not done enough to integrate these foreign-trained professionals into our health care system. I don't think her government can take much credit for what they did between 1995 and 2003. Obviously, she'll disagree.

I am interested in finding out from her what her party would propose to ensure that we are able to better utilize the vast talent we have in this province, talent from foreign-trained medical professionals. In my riding, I speak to many who are relegated to working in professions that do not make use of their vast education and their vast talents. As she rightly pointed out, there is a serious shortage of medical doctors in this province, not just in rural jurisdictions but in this very city of Toronto. So I would like her to expand a little bit on that. I realize her time will be limited and there will be other comments, but I'd like her to tell us more about what her plans entail to ensure that these international medical graduates are given the opportunities they should expect to receive once they arrive in Ontario.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's a pleasure to make a few comments on the 20 minutes or so of the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who has spent a lot of time in this place. I do respect her for a lot of things she does. She was a Minister of Health, after all, and I'm sure

they did a few things. But she touched on some issues pertaining to my riding: the shortage of long-term-care beds. She's right that there is a shortage of long-term-care beds in the Quinte area. We're not going to deny it. We can't run away from it. And she's right that they built 20,000 beds under their watch. They put them in the wrong place—none in the Quinte area. You can't build long-term-care beds overnight, but what did our government do? Yes, it's not enough and we need to do more. We've announced 197 new beds, 100 some-odd in Hastings and 60 some-odd in Quinte West. So we are trying to address this situation.

She commented that with the money we're spending on health care, we're not seeing results. Let me bring her up to speed for a minute: a rehabilitation of the Belleville hospital, and they got three or four rubber cheques. They can never put in the shovel under their watch. The shovel is in the ground now and the building is starting to go. They presented "Go" three or four times but they never got a go because they never got any money.

What did we do with the rest of the money? Let me tell the member: a CT scan at the Trenton Memorial hospital, an MRI at the Northumberland Hills Hospital, an MRI at the Belleville General Hospital, and do you know what? A community health centre in the municipality of Port Hope, where they closed a hospital.

With that in mind, I would ask what they are going to do or what their plan is if they plan to cut \$2.5 million out of the health care budget, to cut it to its guts?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I want to thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for her very good presentation on the budget, particularly as it relates to health care and the long-term care in our society. I don't think there's anyone in the Legislature who could do a better job of that and who understands the problem in health care as acutely as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo does.

I find the comment from the member for Northumberland rather interesting, first of all, in suggesting that, yes, it was very nice that the previous government built 20,000 beds, but that they built them in the wrong place. I would just like to ask him where he has heard that we have an oversupply? We don't have any oversupply anywhere. What I think is important is that this budget does nothing to deal with the problem. It's not looking to add long-term-care beds anywhere. It's just saying that the status quo was good enough and that, in my opinion, is not good enough. I had the opportunity to go to some of the public hearings on Bill 140, the bill that deals with the restructuring of the health care system to some extent, and particularly as it relates to long-term care. All the people coming in were saying, "We need more. We need things put in this bill, because this does absolutely nothing to improve the cause of long-term care in Ontario."

What we need is to upgrade the C and B facilities so that they all can live in the standards that some are living in today, yet there is nothing in this budget that does that. I think it's a very apt question to answer. Since the

McGuinty government came to power, we are spending \$4,500 more per household than we were when they started. Are we getting that level of service? Has our health care system, has our education system, improved to that extent? I think it's, on behalf of my constituents, a resounding no.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I look forward to a few minutes to comment on the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I have to say she is one of the best-dressed members in this House and I've always admired her for that. I also have the say, of course, that there's no doubt that a scandal is happening in our long-term care. We have seniors who have to eat on \$5.46 a day. This is a scandal. We have a quality of care being paid for by this government that is scandalous in terms of the number of hours per week per patient. Yes, that is a scandal.

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I hope in my 20-minute span, though, to speak about some other issues that are pertinent in this budget and actually represent a number of voices in our community. They are the voices of labour leaders and union members, the voices of anti-poverty activists, the voices of legal aid clinic staff, the voices of small business owners, the voices of artists and educators, the voices of the leaders of our cities and environmentalists, all of whom have serious issues with what is more spin than substance in this budget. I look forward to taking some time to do that.

I was at a town hall last night in Etobicoke–Lakeshore on the minimum wage, and some of the comments about this budget from that town hall—this is post-budget—were "snow job," "smoke and mirrors," "an insult to our intelligence" and "birdcage liner." I actually wrote those down because I thought they were good. So I look forward to expanding upon those comments and the sentiment behind them and all of those who expected so much and received absolutely so little from what I've called before the "fudget." I'll go into more detail, of course, particularly on a subject close and dear to my heart, which is Bill 150, the minimum wage bill: \$10 an hour now. Not in three years—now.

The Acting Speaker: Time for response.

Mrs. Witmer: Thank you very much to those who just spoke. To the member for York South–Weston: I'd love to have a long-time discussion with him around foreign-trained physicians. Certainly there continues to be more that we can do in order to facilitate their entry into practice, but as I mentioned, between 1995 and 2003 we were able to increase the number foreign-trained professionals to practise in this province by 130%, and that was a remarkable feat.

To the member for Northumberland: I am concerned about the lack of beds for those who require long-term-care homes. In 1998, we had to build and have a plan for 20,000 additional beds because in the previous 10 years, beginning with the Liberal government and continuing through the NDP, there were no plans for new beds for our older residents. We're starting to see the same thing

happening now. This government does not have a plan for any new long-term-care beds. They are only responding when there is an emergency. As far as the rubber cheques, I can say to the member for Northumberland that we have not yet seen any cheque for Cambridge Memorial Hospital. There have been politics being played with a hospital that is old, that is in desperate need of expansion and renewal, and we have seen absolutely no cheque from this government despite some sort of commitment from time to time from either the Premier or the minister, and then they renege.

As far as the member for Oxford goes, I appreciate his remarks. Again, he spoke to long-term care.

The member for Parkdale–High Park: I appreciate her passion for those less fortunate.

The Acting Speaker: Time for further debate.

Ms. DiNovo: Perhaps I'll start with a story. This comes from one of the dozens of town halls that we've conducted around Ontario on the issue of the \$10 minimum wage and the reality of those who are the working poor, and the other reality that we need this now, not three years from now.

This was a young woman, a woman of colour, the daughter of an immigrant family, who talked about the joy of getting her first part-time job after high school. She went home with great glee to her parents and said, "I just got my first job." Her father said to her, "And how much are you earning, dear?" She said, "Eight dollars an hour." She said a shadow passed across his face and he said, "That's what I make."

This was a gentleman who was looking after a family, worked 40 hours a week; his wife made minimum wage as well. They used a food bank at the end of the month and they barely were able every month to feed their children and to pay the rent. So women like that—those are the voices I would like to bring forward to this community.

I think Murray Campbell said it best in the *Globe* article when he said that this government, the McGuinty government, talking about poverty is a sort of deathbed conversion. I was hoping that it was, but what we received in this budget is not a conversion moment by any stretch of the imagination. What we received were promises for next year, sometime never promises, and nothing that affects the lives of those that I speak for today immediately.

So rather than deal with promises in the future—because they say that the prediction of future behaviour is past behaviour. The past behaviour of the McGuinty government in 2003 was to make a lot of promises and not to keep very many of them. So rather than look at what they promise for the future, including a \$10 minimum wage some time three years from now, let's look at what Ontario actually received two weeks from when the budget was first announced.

What's happened to the average Ontarian? Well, this budget has not raised their minimum wage to \$10 an hour, despite the ballyhoo. We didn't pick that number out of the air. That is the low-income cut-off. That means

that if you make below that, you are poor. If you make \$10, you're just slightly above the poverty line. This has been fought for by poverty activists like Campaign 2000, by unions and by a number of people for a number of years now, and Bill 150 gave it expression.

What they have done instead is bring in a phased-in raise that won't be really realized for three years. Every single stage of that raise keeps those making that amount of money below the poverty line. So not only do they not fulfill the spirit or the letter of what we asked for with the raise-the-minimum-wage campaign—and it is a campaign, a campaign that's seen thousands of Ontarians send us e-mail and come to our town halls from here to Ottawa to Sudbury to Kingston. We're still holding those town hall meetings and we're still getting the same passion and the same excitement. When you see your paycheque at the end of the week, you don't believe the spin that you hear in the dailies. When you get your paycheque at the end of the week, you know what you receive, not what the government promises. And we know what promises are worth from politicians.

This budget has not ended the clawback of the national child supplement either, despite the spin, and I quote here from an anti-poverty activist from Income Security Advocacy Centre. I had the honour of serving on this panel last night with Sarah Blackstock. The question: "Does the new Ontario child benefit end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement?" Answer: "No. When fully implemented in 2011, a single parent on Ontario Works with one child will be better off by \$50/month—not \$122, which is the value of the clawback." And that's in 2011. Remember, this is money that comes from the federal government and goes to the poorest children in the province, and the McGuinty Liberal government claws it back and keeps it. They are not going to return it, not ever, and only \$50 of it in 2011. That's shameful.

This budget has not raised ODSP or OW rates. How can I say that? Well, they says they raised them by 2%. Whoop-de-do: 2%. That's not even the inflation rate. We had a disabled individual last night at the town hall, sitting there, and he was angry. He was absolutely angry. This is someone who cannot work. People on ODSP cannot work and we do not pay them enough to live. That is the reality of one of the wealthiest jurisdictions in the world. We should be ashamed and appalled at that.

Interjection.

Ms. DiNovo: Absolutely. My friend from York South–Weston pointed out the fact that, on the other hand—I will get to that—one of the things this budget has provided is what amounts to a 31% increase for the politicians sitting before us. Those at home know this. They know how much money they've received: \$40,000 for Dalton McGuinty alone, which is way more than twice what someone makes on minimum wage. I have to say, on that note, to my colleague from York South–Weston, that when Mr. Sorbara, Minister of Finance, stood up to announce the budget, his shoes, which cost \$256, were more than the poorest children in this

province will receive this year from this government. They get \$250; he gets \$256 shoes.

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Mr. Ferreira: He gets new shoes and the poor get the boot.

Ms. DiNovo: Absolutely.

This budget has not put one provincial penny into housing or child care. The great amounts ballyhooed, \$25 million for child care: The federal government gives them \$100 million. They're actually clawing back child care dollars that come from the federal government. In 2003, they promised \$300 million for child care, and now, six months before an election, we get \$25 million of federal dollars—not one penny from the province, again despite the fact that we live in one of the wealthiest jurisdictions in the world.

What about small business? When I first read this budget, I thought, "Oh, maybe they've passed my resolution." What was my resolution? The resolution was to reform the business education tax for small, suffering business, I might say, across Ontario. Then, of course, like others, I took the time to read the small print. Here's what small business tells us about this budget. This is from the website of the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas. Lionel Miskin of TABIA is an excellent representative for small retailers and small business.

"Lionel Miskin, TABIA vice-president and tax committee chair expressed disappointment that the Ontario budget, once again, fails to address the dilemma of Toronto's small retailers. 'While the government has recognized that the huge disparities in education tax rates across the province need to be addressed, the budget proposal will have no'"—and I say it again, "no"—"significant effect on Toronto's small retailers for years to come," he states.

"The provincial government taxes Toronto's commercial property to the hilt, with education levies that it uses elsewhere in the province. This overloads our membership, most of which is comprised of small retailers, with tens of millions of dollars in property taxes. Ever since the provincial government introduced current value assessment, most of these retailers have seen their property taxes increasing annually at rates which are double and triple the inflation rate. Between the annual assessment increases, usually 5%, plus the city's rate increases, 1.5%, many of these retailers are struggling to stay afloat.

"The provincial levy is hurting Toronto very badly," adds Mr. Miskin. 'It is contributing to the erosion of the city's commercial base, making it more and more difficult for the city to raise the revenues it needs.'"

I thank him for that and for all the hard work that he and TABIA do for small business in this province.

Who else is affected by this budget? Certainly, others who are near and dear to my heart are, of course, artists. What does this budget do to artists? Remember that artists are among the poorest individuals in our province. They make, on average, around \$26,000 or \$27,000 a year. This government, again, in 2003 promised status-

of-the-artist legislation. What have they received? Certainly not status-of-the-artist legislation. What they received was the status-of-the-artist act. What does the act say? Actually, the only concrete thing it says is that they're going to have a Celebrate the Artist Weekend in June. "Well, wonderful," say the struggling artists who can't feed their children or pay the rent. "That's not going to help." What do they need? What do they want? Here is what they want; this was written by the cultural workers of the Ontario Federation of Labour. This is what they're calling for:

- protections for child performers, as my Bill 191 would put into effect, if it were passed;

- access to training and professional development programs and funds;

- tax measures favourable to artists, such as income averaging and/or exclusions of certain incomes from provincial taxes;

- protections for senior artists and housing; and

- bargaining procedures for all professional artists and producers/engagers in the province of Ontario.

Again, they received absolutely none of this. In fact, the amounts of money that were received by various arts communities were always less than asked for—in the case of the Ontario Arts Council, half of what they asked for—and this in light of a \$90-million slash-and-burn to the culture budget that happened last year. So what have artists received? Absolutely nothing.

What about housing activists? There's an interesting question. What have housing activists got? Well, through a freedom of information act, we actually pushed this government to give us an answer to a question that we had been asking over and over, and that is, how many affordable housing units with rents between \$300 and \$500 a month had this government provided? We finally got the answer: 285. They promised 20,000 in 2003. My resolution asked them to provide what they promised in 2003, the 20,000. That amount of money is 30% of anybody on OW, ODSP or minimum wage, so truly affordable housing. The bulk of housing units they provided, around 2,000 in total, are for those making \$30,000 to \$70,000 a year, hardly what most Ontarians would call affordable housing. Again, what did we get? We didn't get much. We didn't get anything.

Here are some voices on what we didn't get. This is the centre for policy research talking about ODSP. They say that they're actually receiving less—that's people on ODSP—in provincial benefits when inflation is taken into account than they were under the Harris-Eves government when the McGuinty government was elected in 2003. That's with the whopping 2% increase.

Something else, of course, is education. This is the government that prides itself on being the education government. What was delivered in this budget? This budget delivered a \$781-million increase, which amounts to a funding cut if inflation is more than 1.5%. Post-secondary funding increased by \$100 million, roughly—only matching inflation. Tuition at colleges and universities still climbs 36% from 2005 to 2009. A little earlier I read a petition from the Canadian Federation of

Students and also from SAC at U of T. They are appalled at the rising student debt. Our students now take an average of debt of about \$28,000 for a BA, and then at the end of it can't find any jobs. My son is moving to China to find a job. Go figure. So that's education under this government that prides itself on education.

What about the environment, one might ask? What has this budget done for the environment? Let's just look at the figures here. The total budgeted on the environment is \$125 million. The Liberals promise to spend \$200 million later. Again, I draw the attention of the viewers at home to what "later" means for the McGuinty Liberals when we look at the promises that they came into this government with in 2003 and how many have actually been fulfilled, but still, they'll spend \$200 million later. That equals \$325 million or only about half of the \$586 million the federal government gave Ontario for climate change. The rest, the Liberals say, will go to existing initiatives. So here again, just like with child care, just like with the national child supplement, this government is spending less than they receive from the federal government in its budget.

Mr. Ferreira: Where's that money going?

Ms. DiNovo: One has to ask where the money is going. A couple of things. There were people who woke up this morning and did benefit from the McGuinty Liberal budget. Who were those people, one might ask? Certainly large corporations benefited because this is tax time and they continue to get some capital gains accelerated benefits from this government. Certainly Magna corporation, which walked away this morning with \$50 million from this government, gained from this budget.

Ian Urquhart wrote an interesting article about fund-raising for the Liberals and Tories. Do you know that the same corporations fund both? They hedge their bets. So who do the Liberals and Tories represent? They represent the same corporate interests. There's no question about that.

Mr. Ferreira: Aren't CEO salaries up?

Ms. DiNovo: CEO salaries, my colleague from York South-Weston, are at an all-time high: \$9 million a year. The gross domestic product portion of corporate profits is at an all-time high: 14%. We've never seen those kinds of figures since Confederation.

Obviously, some people are doing well, but not the one in six children in this province who live in poverty and who are still living in poverty; not the 15% to 17% of households who are living in poverty. No, they're still living in poverty. Compare that to Ireland's rate of poverty of 8%.

What about all those people who have been working so hard, for example, in our legal aid clinics, who supposedly just got \$51 million from the government? It's interesting that Parkdale legal aid's clinic director, Kevin Smith, sent me an e-mail today: "I had mentioned to you then about the Liberals' disingenuous claims regarding the increase to legal aid funding. This had everyone fooled, including," he says, "the Toronto Star and the read of the Ontario Bar Association," and basically he goes into an explanation which I won't go into because

it's lengthy. At the end of the day, what did they get? They got \$19 million. Many legal aid clinics are in danger of actually closing their doors. That's the reality of this budget.

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What does this budget do for the 122,000 households that are waiting for affordable housing? Absolutely nothing. What does it do for the 67,000 households waiting for affordable housing in the GTA? Absolutely nothing. There are \$100 rent supplements: We all know how far a \$100 rent supplement a month will go in the city of Toronto—

Mr. Ferreira: Not far at all.

Ms. DiNovo: —not very far at all.

When we look at the situation here for climate change, we should be appalled at the federal dollars they're not spending on the environment. Where is the money going? Well, \$40 billion to \$45 billion is going to nuclear reactors. There's a progressive step: \$40 billion to \$45 billion on nuclear reactors, and they still haven't closed the coal-fired plants, which they promised to do in 2003. Nanticoke is still out there polluting—one of the biggest polluters in Canada. Does this government do anything about it? Absolutely not.

It's sad, at this holy time of year for many faiths, to speak about spin over truth. It's hard to speak about the growing prosperity gap between the haves and the have-nots, the rich and those who are suffering, but what better time of year to speak about it than when we're called to do justice, when we're called to turn to our brothers and sisters and actually do something for them as legislators, what we were elected to do, not to line our own pockets with pay raises—that, they've done extremely well—not to pay off our wealthy and powerful corporate friends—that, they've really done well—but to actually help the poorest among them? We remind you that this government never spoke about poverty six months ago. What made the difference? A huge grassroots movement. We get e-mails every day calling for a raise in the minimum wage.

Mr. Ferreira: They're worrying in York South-Weston.

Ms. DiNovo: Yes, a very telling by-election. Again, my colleague from York South-Weston interjects, where we beat a 13,000-vote spread.

Ontarians are not stupid; Ontarians know spin when they see it. What they get in this budget is spin; what they want is real action. They want a \$10 minimum wage and they want it now, not three years from now when it's not worth the paper it's printed on. They need it now. They want housing now; they need jobs now; they need action on the environment now; they need a fully funded educational system now; they need to have the flawed funding formula fixed now—another broken promise from 2003. They certainly need action on the clawback. They need to end the clawback right now so that the poorest children in our province get the food they need. Of course, those who suffer on Ontario disability need to be able to actually pay their rent and feed themselves at this point.

I'm running out of time but, as you can tell, I'm certainly not running out of energy. I truly do wish, in a very non-partisan way, that I could say something at all reassuring about this budget, but I cannot. The only reassuring statement I can make really is this: We've got them talking about poverty out there in Ontario. Now on October 10 let's show them how to do something about poverty. On October 10, the 10th day of the 10th month, let's have a \$10 minimum wage brought in then, not in 2011. The New Democrats will do that for you.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I appreciate the couple of minutes to respond to the speech by the member from Parkdale–High Park. A couple of things: I know everyone would like, in a non-partisan fashion, to do everything now, but we don't live in that world. Let's work with the world we live in, at least in part.

In three out of four budgets, we've increased Ontario Works and ODSP—in three out of four budgets, there has been an increase. The minimum wage commitment was from \$6.85 to \$8 during the mandate, and that's what we did. It seems to me that the NDP platform called for \$8. It may have been that they were promising \$8 in one step at the beginning, but their platform commitment coming into 2003-04 was for \$8.

They changed their mind along the way. The new member comes. She has a resolution; she has a private member's bill. That now becomes party policy. I didn't hear that in 2003. I didn't hear that from Campaign 2003, as it was being referred to. I didn't hear it in their campaign platform, but we heard it when the new member came, and it now becomes the mantra of her resolution of a private member's bill, but it's not a party platform.

The \$100-a-month housing allowance: If I was in a situation where I needed support for housing and the government offered me \$100 a month in support for my housing needs, I think I would take that. I certainly wouldn't be saying, "No, thank you. I can't use that." It may not be quite enough for everybody, but it goes a lot farther than having nothing available.

There were complaints about: we didn't spend more than the proposed inflation rate for education this year—an additional \$781 million. That's up near a billion dollars. We weren't exceeding the inflation rate. If we exceeded the inflation rate in everything the government does, we'd end up—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Hardeman: I want to thank the member for Parkdale–High Park for the presentation on the budget. Obviously in some areas their concerns are different than I would highlight in my speech, but I think it's very important to recognize that the essence of her presentation was the same as mine would be. I find it most interesting that the primary purpose of this budget appears to be, "We're going to try and deal with the promises we made in the last election so when we go back to the polls, then the people might believe us that we will somehow come

through on the promises we're making for the next election."

The member spoke to the issue of the clawback of the federal child tax benefit. I think it's most interesting. That was a commitment that the Liberals made prior to being elected in 2003: that they would stop doing that. Now, of course, this being the last budget—this is on a deathbed—we're going to say, "We're going to come through on that commitment. We're going to do it this way because we don't want it to look like all of a sudden we're doing it for this purpose. We want to put a program in place that looks like it's something we've spent three years developing and that will reach the commitment of the platform in 2003."

Nothing could be further from the truth. The promise wasn't in 2003 that they would stop the clawback in 2014; the promise was that, if elected, they would stop the clawback.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Your clawback.

Mr. Hardeman: That doesn't matter. The truth of the matter is that that's not what they're doing. With a lot of other areas in this budget they're putting it off so far that even though they're promising it in this budget, in one or two cases they have to get elected twice more in order to be able to see it implemented to what they promised in 2003. That's where they're going wrong: They're not delivering on the promises they made in 2003 to get elected.

Mr. Ferreira: My colleague for Parkdale–High Park is a passionate firebrand for the poor of this province. She deserves a lot of accolades for the work that she has done in this place over the past six or seven months. I'll say this: The \$10-minimum-wage campaign has captured the imagination of a whole slew of Ontarians, and it cuts across socio-economic demographics. It has captured their imagination largely because of her efforts and the work that she has done on this issue. As she mentioned in her speech, it was the issue that determined the results in my riding in that by-election on February 8. I'm immensely grateful to her for leading the charge on this issue.

As we know, the government has come forward with a plan to give the working poor 75 cents per year, not even this year, but starting next year. So they're saying to the poor, "You're going to have to wait three years to get the \$10.25." Yet, while they say this, each and every month on the last day of the month they go to the bank to cash their own raise. It is shameful that members on the opposite side of this House—and, I should say, on the official opposition side as well—gladly put out their hands and took the money and ran four days before Christmas.

Interjection: Give it back.

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Mr. Ferreira: I'm giving mine back. I am giving mine back, and I am proud to do that every single month: to give that money back to the people of my riding, where it belongs.

The actions of this government were shameful on December 21. I will gladly show you a list of the community organizations receiving my money every month. This government takes for themselves and they offer crumbs—

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr. Duguid: Talk about holier than thou. My goodness. People watching today must be just shaking their heads and going, "Wow, these people. They think that they can save the world—just 'holier than thou' on everything they talk about."

The member for Parkdale–High Park said that she wishes she could say something in a non-partisan way; that was the last thing she said. I do too, because the whole time she has been here she has never said anything in a non-partisan way. She's so fixated in her partisan thinking that she can say so incorrectly that there's nothing in this budget for low-income people. Talk about partisan. A child benefit—

Ms. DiNovo: Fifty dollars in five years.

Mr. Duguid: —an historic benefit that's going to deliver \$2.1 billion over time to assist 1.3 million—she's heckling me because she's so holier than thou, she doesn't even think that's a good thing. Unbelievable.

Increases in supports for ODSP, minimum wage increase—

Interjections.

Mr. Duguid: —I think they must be opposed to that too; \$51 million for legal aid help; more money for child care; investments in affordable housing. We're going to build 15,000 more units of affordable housing. Five thousand housing allowances are going through. Of those 15,000 units, 6,700 are already either occupied, under construction or in planning. That's three and a half times more in three and a half years than they, the NDP, did in five years; three and a half times better than the holier-than-thou party did when they were in office. They're all talk; very little action.

This budget does more for low-income people, this budget does more for the vulnerable, than any budget in a very, very long time in this province—in decades. We're proud of this budget. It's good for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The time for questions and comments is over.

It's time for a response. The Chair recognizes the member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. DiNovo: Mr. Speaker, you can certainly feel the passion.

I want to thank the members for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge, Oxford, York South–Weston and Scarborough Centre.

A couple of things that were raised that I'd like to comment on: First of all, the member for Scarborough Centre says they're going to build 15,000 units of housing. In 2003, they said they were going to build 20,000. Now we're now down to 15,000—so actually

we've lost 5,000 units, even according to the promises, not according to the reality.

Raise: We always get this from the opposition. "What do you do with your raise?" I'll tell you what we did. The first raise went to Ground Level Café, a wonderful organization on Queen Street. The second raise went to Ukrainian Social Services, which works with recent immigrants. The third raise went to a breakfast program at Masaryk-Cowan, a wonderful community centre. Every single raise I get, from here on in, is going to somebody in my riding who really needs it, because that's where the money was stolen from by the McGuinty Liberal government. That's the reality.

I'd like to ask what they're doing with their raise. That would be an interesting question.

If you would like to get the press out, I'm happy to show receipts to anybody who would like it. This makes them very angry—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask you to determine if the word "stolen" money by Mr. McGuinty is parliamentary language.

The Acting Speaker: Proceed.

Ms. DiNovo: I withdraw the word "stolen," Mr. Speaker, and say "withheld"—the withheld money from the poorest among us in our ridings. Quite frankly, they get their backs up when we talk about what it actually looks like to be generous. I would think that's more of a comment upon them that we get heckled when we talk about giving money.

But thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's always a delight.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I appreciate the opportunity to speak today to our budget and to the good news that we've provided to many people across this province.

I want to start by just addressing some of the concerns that were raised earlier by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo when she spoke about our long-term-care homes and really didn't address the great progress we've made in our homes.

There was a sense of irony in the room again today as she spoke about the lack of investment that our government has made, when in fact we've invested over \$750 million more in long-term care over the last three years. We've also reinstated a number of the minimum standards that the previous government eradicated when they were in government. We've also started to institute some planning in the system, which was sorely lacking and noted by the Auditor General a couple of times during the Conservative government rule.

We've really made some great strides in long-term care, together with Bill 140 and the investments that we've made. We've certainly invested in more staff. We've seen 4,800 new staff in our long-term-care homes over the last couple of years, including 1,100 new nurses.

We've seen more money in this budget addressed to nurses in long-term care, nurses which I would note the previous government's leader used to refer as hula hoops. We value the work of our nurses across the province.

While I'm talking about the value of nurses across the province, I want to acknowledge the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, who today in our legislative dining room assisted a gentleman who was in crisis. It was a heroic moment. All those of us present who were rather panicked by what was going on were very happy and relieved to have that member in our midst, a nurse who was able to assist in a crisis moment. So thank you, and I salute you for your coolness that was about you during that time.

Mr. Leal: She's an outstanding nurse. Not a hula hoop, an outstanding nurse.

Ms. Smith: Absolutely.

Having said that, I just wanted to take the opportunity to address some concerns that have been raised by some of other members, in particular the member for Parkdale–High Park, who talked at some length, and quite passionately as she always does, about poverty issues. She actually raised some concerns that Campaign 2000 has raised, and I just wanted to address that by quoting from Jacquie Maund, the Ontario coordinator of Campaign 2000, who with respect to our 2007 budget noted, "There are a number of steps forward taken in this budget that are key areas that we have been calling for: improved child benefit, increased minimum wage, and investments in affordable housing and child care."

Michael Mendelson, a senior scholar at the Institute of Social Policy, noted, "It lays some foundations for an adequate income security system by introducing an Ontario child benefit. Now there's a basis in terms of some program structure for continuing development of an income security system for low-income people ... it's a great day and a great change."

Again, there are people who are deeply concerned about poverty issues who are addressing our budget in a positive way.

When I began, I was so intent on thanking the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock that I forgot to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member from Thornhill. So I apologize for the delay in mentioning that, but I will be sharing my time with him.

I want to just address a couple of other poverty issues that were addressed in this budget. I had the privilege on Tuesday of being back in my area and spending some time with Lana Mitchell. Lana Mitchell is the executive director of Low Income People Involvement or, as we call it at home, LIPI. Many in this House have heard me speak about Lana's work on the front lines, dealing with poverty issues and social activity, a number of times here in this House. I'm privileged today to speak a little bit about her front-line work and her reaction to the budget.

I thought it would be useful and helpful and perhaps beneficial to her to have Lana come down and hear the budget first-hand here at the Legislature. She joined us on budget day, and I was delighted that she was able to

do that. She was really delighted with a number of the elements of our budget. She was thrilled to see that we are moving our minimum wage to \$10 over the next three years. She thinks that's an important step and she's very pleased that we're taking that action. She was thrilled to see increases to ODSP and Ontario Works because she does a great deal of work with those people. She was really excited about the housing allowances, and on Tuesday had the opportunity to talk about the housing allowance program with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who was in the riding, and discuss first-hand how those housing allowances are going to impact the day-to-day lives of those people living at or below the poverty line in my community.

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She was also very complimentary about our rent bank program. She is the administrator of the rent bank program in my riding and as such was able to speak first-hand to the impact that that program has had on the day-to-day lives of those living in poverty in my community.

She was really positive about our Ontario child benefit. She thinks that this is a really great step in the right direction to address poverty issues, not only for those who are living on ODSP or Ontario Works but for our working poor. The program, which is going to cost \$2.1 billion when it's fully implemented, will assist 1.2 million children living in poverty across the province. It's a program that I'm incredibly proud of that the women's caucus here and the McGuinty government have worked hard towards developing. We are very proud to see its implementation in Ontario through our 2007 budget.

We've also made some great strides through this budget in my community in particular. Through the rural infrastructure initiatives, a program which was doubled under this budget, we're seeing \$4.2 million invested in my rural communities. These are important rural infrastructure investments that are going to really benefit my rural areas in Nipissing.

We've got a bridge replacement in Bonfield. We've got a sewer line replacement in Callander for \$1.6 million—money that the city of Callander was hard-pressed to come up with and is delighted to receive. Calvin is seeing some infrastructure investments, as is Chisholm—\$1.1 million to do road upgrades to ensure that our children are safely bused to school from our rural areas. In Mattawa we're seeing about \$500,000 invested in sewer reconstruction as well as \$3.1 million on highway reconstruction. These are very important investments and really key to the infrastructure of those communities. In Powassan we're seeing more infrastructure investments in roads, and in Mattawa as well as the town of Nipissing. And through our transit trust transfer, we're seeing the city of North Bay receive \$1.175 million, which they weren't expecting, which will allow them to invest in infrastructure and capital and address some of the concerns that they have about some shortfalls.

We're also seeing, in my community, \$3.78 million to the District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board for affordable housing, another issue that was

raised by the member for Parkdale–High Park. In my community, we have 46 new housing units being built, as we speak, due to open this summer that will assist our low-income earners as well as those living with disabilities. It's an incredible project run by PHARA in my community. We're very excited about it, and that's a first step.

This \$3.78 million for low-income housing is another important second step that will really see some of the issues addressed in my community that have been long-standing and were not addressed by the previous government through 10 years of lack of investment in low-income and affordable housing.

The business education tax, which is really going to benefit small businesses across the province, will have a direct impact in my riding of \$3.1 million—a saving to my small businesses. We've heard from the chamber of commerce, which was also very pleased to see that initiative introduced in our provincial budget.

We're also seeing benefits in the area of education. We're seeing continued investment in education, and that's going to continue to benefit our children, our smaller class sizes, our young children in the early years. On that note, I believe my niece, Kate, is watching tonight. I wanted to say hi to her because she told me I didn't say hi to her the other day when I spoke in the House.

I also want to address some of the teachers who are pleased about the investments that we're making. Hilda Watkins, the president of the Ontario Teachers Federation, noted, "Teachers have been pleased to see this government's increased commitment to publicly funded education since its election in 2003. Today's budget recognizes responsibilities beyond the school playground for improving student learning."

We're seeing a cross-section of stakeholders, including those who are poverty activists, who are responding very positively to the 2007 budget, to the initiatives that we've undertaken to improve the quality of life for all Ontarians. I am particularly proud of the initiatives that we've made with respect to those living close to the poverty line, with respect to our children living in poverty and with respect to those living in rural areas, oftentimes afflicted by poverty as well.

We're particularly proud of the investments we've made in the north. We're seeing more investments in Ontario Northland, we're seeing continued investment through the northern Ontario heritage fund, we're seeing investment in rural infrastructure and we're also seeing, through the property tax reduction, education tax reduction, a benefit to our businesses across northern Ontario.

I'm particularly proud of the budget that we've presented and I look forward to hearing my colleague from Thornhill, who has further to say about the budget.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): It's a pleasure for me to speak on the bill today. I will be speaking as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour in regard to the budget.

It is no secret that injured workers in this province have fought long and hard for reforms to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. We, as members, have heard their heartbreaking stories, their frustrations and their despair.

The concerns of injured workers are not new. Injured workers have been patiently waiting a long time for action. Successive governments have failed them, in particular the NDP. I would like to remind the House that it was the NDP government that in 1994 introduced the Friedland formula, beginning the indexation of most workers' compensation benefits. It was the NDP that first put its hands into the pockets of injured workers. Two successive Tory governments treated injured workers no better. In fact, in 1998, the former government introduced a modified Friedland formula, which further eroded most injured workers' benefits. For over 12 long years, injured workers and their representatives have been fighting for changes to the WSIA. At last they have a government that is listening to their concerns and has finally taken action.

The 2007 budget outlines several WSIA reforms that, if passed, will go a long way to repairing the damage done by the two previous governments, and reforms to the compensation system will, if passed, provide more than 155,000 injured workers with their first real benefit increase in 12 long years.

Our government's proposal for three 2.5% increases each year will more than double the total increase seen over the last 12 years. Further, we have created the flexibility to allow the government to provide fair increases in the future without the necessity of making legislative change.

The Office of the Worker Adviser will receive \$810,000 annually in additional funding to help educate, advise and represent more non-union workers. And other proposed changes include the following:

- replacing the controversial term "deeming" and adding the concept of "availability of employment" in order to better approximate a worker's post-injury earnings;

- making changes to the 72-month lock-in provision in order to allow the WSIB the ability to increase benefits to workers who suffer a temporary or permanent deterioration in their condition;

- changing the threshold amount of the loss of retirement income lump sum benefit to allow more workers to receive the benefit as a lump sum instead of as a small monthly payment;

- increasing the size of the WSIB board of directors and clarifying the separation of the positions of chair and president.

Our government is committed to a brighter future for injured workers and their families. That is why in 2004 we ordered an independent audit of the WSIB. We understood that restoring stability to the WSIB was an essential first step to enable our government to move forward with improvements to benefits for injured workers. A follow-up audit in 2006 concluded that the

board had made significant progress in implementing the initial audit recommendations.

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The WSIB took action and put in place a number of initiatives to help address its financial challenges and improve its operational efficiency. As a result, even before the government's proposed WSIA reforms were announced, the WSIB had on its own announced increases to several injured workers' allowances in both the years January 2006 and January 2007. This positive change had already put money into the hands of thousands of injured workers. Our government is committed to an accountable WSIB that protects the long-term stability of Ontario's workplace insurance system now and for future generations of workers and their families. These proposed WSIA amendments are good news for injured workers and their families.

Of course, now I would like to address the change to the minimum wage which has been spoken about many times. In 2003, our government promised, if elected, to raise the minimum wage. I remind this House that under the Tory government the minimum wage had remained frozen for nine years. Immediately upon assuming office, our government kept its promise and raised the minimum wage. In fact, we have raised the minimum wage every year we have been in office—that is four times—an overall increase of 17%. By phasing in these increases we are able to help low-income and vulnerable workers while giving Ontario businesses the opportunity to adjust and remain competitive so they can create more jobs. It is exactly the same approach we will be using as we raise the minimum wage another 28% to \$10.25 an hour by the year 2010. This budget, if passed, will guarantee increases of 75 cents each year, on March 31, 2008, 2009 and 2010. We know it is in the best interest of Ontario to help low-income working people. Our government is raising the minimum wage again because we know it is right thing to do and we are doing it. We are not just talking about it; we are doing it.

We are committed to fair and balanced policies and we have proven to the citizens of Ontario that we are good and fair managers. In fact, the budget we are debating today is a balanced budget, balanced in the sense that the numbers on either side of the ledger match up and balanced in the sense that those who need help get it. I'm proud to be part of a government that knows how to balance the books while doing it right.

The opposition, when in government, chose to ignore our most vulnerable citizens during their hours of greatest need. When we took office, we inherited a large fiscal deficit and an even larger compassion deficit. We are correcting both, the compassion and the books. Of course, Bill 187 also provides additional funding of \$3.6 million to help the Ministry of Labour deal with its employment standards claims backlog. As a result of our government's improvements to service delivery, Ontario workers now have improved access to claims information. Consequently, claim numbers have risen dramatically. Although the vast majority—over 88%—of

employment standards claims are resolved, some claims take more time than others. These additional funds will relieve staffing pressure and help us to provide even better services to our vulnerable workers.

Our government has an excellent record when it comes to protecting vulnerable workers and enforcing the law. We have the statistics that can prove that. It's not just promises; those are facts. In 2004 we established the dedicated employment standards enforcement team to undertake proactive target inspections. In 2004 and 2005, that team undertook 2,355 inspections. When we took office, the number of targeted inspections was a mere 151. So from 151, we went to 2,355—quite an improvement.

We have done more to enforce the law in our first term than the two previous governments combined. Under both the NDP and the Tory governments, ES prosecutions totalled approximately six per year—six. That is a total of 97 from the year 1990 to the year 2003. Since 2004 there have been over 1,000 prosecutions completed. That means revenue for the province. That means taking care that the employees in Ontario are taken care of properly.

The 2007 budget is the fourth part of our plan to invest in people and expand possibilities for all Ontarians. There are many good things in the budget. I thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I thank the member from Nipissing for her kind words when she spoke earlier. I hope everyone is feeling well in the Legislature at this moment, please.

Mr. Ferreira: But if we're not, we're in good hands.

Ms. Scott: "If we're not, we're in good hands": a good compliment to all nurses. You saw that at two sporting events this week, where nurses came to the rescue and revived people. So, well done, all the nurses. Nurses are great, and certainly an integral part of our health care system.

But this afternoon we're speaking on the Budget Measures Act, April 2007, and some feedback that I've received in my riding and some criticisms—we are in opposition—of the budget, in a helpful way. I'm sure the government will take it as very helpful.

We've seen this government increase spending by \$22 billion annually, which is a large amount of money, taxpayers' money, coming out of their pockets. We're pretty concerned how they're spending it. Some would say "reckless." I would tend to agree. In a lot of areas, some reckless spending.

The statistics of how much the debt has risen, how much spending there is, saying anything to get elected—we are in an election year. We see that Ontario has lost over 120,000 high-paying manufacturing jobs over the past two years alone. We see that disposable incomes in Ontario are growing at the slowest rate in the country. They've grown annually by 4% over the previous four years, so fully 0.8% slower than the national average. Total program spending by the McGuinty government has skyrocketed by an average of 7.9% each year.

Those are a lot of numbers, but we're just saying that you're spending a lot of money. Are people getting any better services, especially in the health sector, which we'll start with?

We've seen the long-term-care association, in respect to their great disappointment in the budget, saying, "The cupboard is bare for long-term care." They brought in a bill, the Long-Term Care Act. It was consistently said out there: "Where are the capital dollars to upgrade our B and C homes?" They were said by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to be a budgetary item: "We'll deal with it in the budget." But the budget has come and gone, and the long-term-care homes and the association are not happy at all; very upset. We've got rural communities that are upset. Is there any stability for long-term-care centres to be set up and to stay there? Will all of a sudden the government say, "We don't want you there; we want you somewhere else"? Very unstable for residents and families. There have been many caring, concerned staff come in to me to say, "The workloads are incredible. We can't provide the care we want to." Those men and women who work in long-term-care centres take those patients in like they are their family. They treat them really well. They're just overburdened. The present McGuinty government said that they would promise \$6,000 per resident. We saw them get maybe one more minute of care, I think, in this budget, as it's broken down here. So they're offering 50 cents per resident, one more minute of care, after they made that promise of \$6,000 per resident that they would increase their level of care to. Again, a broken promise. It's not a big surprise, but it's a continuing theme. At least they've been consistent in that.

The previous government invested a lot in new long-term-care centres. I know that most of the members of the Legislature saw new long-term-care homes go up in their ridings. That took the wait-lists away for a while, but they're back. I think in every riding we face the same situation, the wait-lists for long-term-care beds. That's not acceptable. We all knew the demographics. We all knew that we had an aging population and we needed more long-term-care facilities. The government has a leadership role to have a plan to deal with that. But again, a recurring theme with the present government: Where's the plan? Where's the plan for anything? In long-term care they have not delivered. The member for Kitchener-Waterloo has done a great job as critic for the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, has heard the demands from the long-term-care sector, their needs. And, rightfully so, they are disappointed beyond belief. And how could we treat our seniors, the people who built our province, that way? It's embarrassing. They said in their 2003 platform promise, "We will build a seniors strategy that guarantees our seniors be treated with respect and dignity." Well, they haven't planned how to do it—all words again, no action, no plan.

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When they made their promise to ensure we have enough nurses—"We're going to increase the nurses"—

they got seven-and-a-half-month contracts, I think, signed. That's not putting in a stable nursing environment. That's not doing anything to attract back nurses who have gone to other countries to work. That's not doing anything to encourage nurses to get into the nursing program, to know they'll have a full-time job when they graduate. There's no stability in that. As we've said before, they certainly are the backbone of the health care system. That promise, again, fell short. We're six months from an election and there are still not enough nurses out there. We hear, "nurse shortage, nurse shortage," and no guarantee of full-time employment in many of the areas, especially in rural Ontario.

The family health teams: We've had some family health team announcements. Are they up and running and fully staffed? No. Would they like a better system to get up and running? Yes. I hear that a lot from my riding. Two family health centres announced theirs. But they need some more incentives to get up and running and to be fully servicing the people in their communities that they want to. I thank those communities for applying and trying to get the health care to their citizens that they need. I know in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, we have about 30,000 orphaned patients.

Back to the wait times: The wait times in the province are still bad. They promised, "We will work with experts to set and meet maximum needs based on waiting time for care." Well, wait times in the province are well above target: for MRIs, 28 days—provincial average, 105 days; knee replacement target, 182 days—provincial average, 307 days; hip replacement target, 182—provincial average, 257. It's very disappointing that they are not servicing the health care needs of Ontarians. I guess we will judge on October 10—coming soon—what the people of Ontario think. They're paying more. Are they getting better health care?

The majority of my riding is in the eastern Ontario region and is represented quite ably by the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, who have done an outstanding job of representing the rural population of eastern Ontario. It represents 13 eastern Ontario governments. It includes all of my riding except the Brock townships. It includes the Haliburton, Peterborough and Kawartha Lakes area. They have been diligent in getting their message out to the government. They asked for specific things in the budget that would help rural Ontario. What did they say in respect to 2007 Ontario budget?

It "fails to address major problems that 'threaten the economic health' of rural communities in eastern Ontario"....

"The budget didn't even touch on two of our most serious concerns: The state of the region's roads and bridges, and the cost we incur to provide services to crown lands."

That's from Doug Struthers, who is the chairman of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus. He did say one good thing, and I have to say there was one good part in the budget, in respect to broadband, with which I agree. There's \$10 million for broadband services in rural

communities across southern Ontario. We have certainly had a need for more broadband infrastructure up in my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock. I've written to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal for that assistance, because that is a huge economic boost to a community to have high-speed Internet broadband in their ridings. There were programs available before the 2003 election. Nothing has come to assist in any huge way these municipalities, these communities that need high-speed infrastructure. There was a pilot project that was done in the Apsley part of my riding in north Kawartha, for \$70,000. They took that and partnered with the municipality, with private enterprise. They grew that to well over \$700,000 in partnerships. They put more towers up in remote areas, because we're challenged for signals, in my riding, with rocks and trees. And they got a call centre in one of their areas. They created employment. Just an example of municipalities, that if you give them a little incentive, they can grow it. I commend the north Kawartha township and Apsley for their diligence and foresight in increasing their economic infrastructure up there. They just needed that little bit of an incentive, which is part of what the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus was asking for. I hope that there's some broadband monies coming to my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock because we need that in rural Ontario. We need the economic boost. We really need it in eastern Ontario.

We asked for an eastern Ontario secretariat. I know that colleagues from this side of the caucus have asked for an eastern Ontario prosperity fund and an eastern Ontario secretariat to take the lead, similar to what is available to northern Ontario, because we have a region that's really hit hard by the loss of manufacturing jobs, by lower population, by more roads and bridges than other parts of Ontario. We've been diligent in asking for that. I know that Ric McGee, who's the city of Kawartha Lakes mayor now, said that the province needs to make a significant investment in the future of eastern Ontario by creating an eastern Ontario prosperity fund. "Our region is blessed with abundant natural resources, a location near major markets, many diverse communities, and great people. But we're also dealing with the harsh realities of declining industries, the out-migration of our young people and average annual family incomes 17% lower than the rest of the province." That's from the mayor of the city of Kawartha Lakes, Ric McGee, and I agree: This is a serious problem.

We're happy with the \$10-million broadband, but you certainly can do more with that infrastructure.

Mr. Leal: Good first step.

Ms. Scott: It's a good first step; let's carry it on.

Agriculture: It's certainly an urban budget—agriculture, small business, the backbone of rural Ontario's economy. You have said repeatedly that you were going to make agriculture a lead ministry; that's what we heard in 2003. It's the lead ministry in cuts, because for three straight years in a row you've cut the agriculture budget.

The farmers got together—the farmers forgotten by the Liberal government—and proposed a risk management program. They actually sat and created a solution. Did we see that come in in the budget? No. Has the Minister of Agriculture listened to the needs of rural Ontario? No. The farmers—the second-largest industry in Ontario is agriculture and agriculture businesses—should be a predominant ministry in a government. And what we've seen is cuts and cuts again. Association of Municipalities of Ontario president Doug Reycraft said, "There is still a need for better income protection for farmers."

We need to assist our farmers if we want to grow safe, secure food, be able to feed ourselves, buy more Ontario products, encourage people, educate people. The need for farming in the province of Ontario—we grow the best foods. We should be assisting the farmers the best we can so that they can stay in business.

In the city of Kawartha Lakes, in 2006, 50 farmers left the farm. Tragedy; I don't want to see that happening in my rural communities. It just erodes our rural infrastructure, our businesses. People have no idea what it does to rural communities. If you want an Ontario like that—I certainly don't want it. I want farmers to stay out there. I want my rural communities to succeed. This government has got to have a much more assistive, progressive, optimistic view towards agriculture. I think the Minister of Agriculture was in Peterborough the day after the budget, and I know that many farmers went there. I hope she heard their concerns and needs.

1730

Another topic is Best Start child care, and I know that the member from Peterborough is quite aware of this issue in that the city of Kawartha Lakes–Haliburton is the only service manager that got designated zero Best Start spaces. I kept saying, "Are you sure you've got that right? Can we help you with some more information about that?" It means a huge thing to the children in the area—no designation of Best Start spaces; zero, as I said before; the only service provider that did not get any in Ontario. I've asked the minister, and hopefully she will re-look at that. I know the member from Peterborough was trying to assist us in that way because it is about the children. If they are not looked after, what does that say about our future? I certainly don't want my area discriminated against as compared to the rest.

Mr. Leal: I'm going to help you.

Ms. Scott: The member from Peterborough says he's going to help me, and I certainly would appreciate any assistance in influencing the minister to reconsider her decision on that at all.

I know I don't have a whole lot of time left, and we could never touch all the areas in the budget, but we can talk about the environment. Would that be all right over there, with the members opposite?

What is this? The green government? Somehow I think that that got lost in some non-budgetary announcement. Where was the help for the environment? The federal Conservative government gave you money.

You didn't even spend that. "Coming soon to a place near you: We're going to address environment needs." Three and a half years into the mandate, six months before the election—extending the date again, I'm sure. Look at the coal-fired plants. They've broken that promise once, twice, three times. Do we really ever know when they're going to implement that promise to close the coal-fired plants?

The Clean Water Act—downloading to municipalities. Everybody wants clean water, but downloading to municipalities and landowners is no way to help the environment.

Climate change—it's like they don't even know the word over there. The federal government is going to provide nearly \$600 million. They increased the budget just such a little bit on the environment that it's negligible. Environment is right up there with health care as one of the top concerns of the people of Ontario, and they haven't addressed it.

Let me see. The Environment Commissioner addressed it. He said, "Neglecting Our Obligations." I'd have to say that the Ministry of the Environment was all but ignored in the budget. You'd think that she had been pleading with Minister of Finance to say, "We need to meet those promises that we made in the 2003 election campaign. We haven't met them yet, but we've got six months. We can at least introduce something."

We saw a bill introduced on Tuesday of this week that—again, who knows how long the legislative agenda will be, but it's two and a half months so far that we know of. So we'd be happy to see more details of that legislation. But the government does the legislative agenda. You'd think, if they were serious, they would have actually introduced this a little bit earlier. But what can we say? They had to wait until there was more pressure. They certainly got the money from the federal government, so we can't hear any more of that griping on that side about their failure to deal with the climate—

Interjection.

Ms. Scott: Yes, it's all solved. The environment's okay. "Don't worry; be happy. We've got this in control."

Let's talk property assessments for a little bit. I've got a quote from the St. Catharines Standard here that says, "View from Across the Province...."

"The Liberal plan to reform property assessments will do little to bring accountability to a flawed system. Homeowners can still expect assessment increases, but they will just be averaged over a four-year term. At the end of the four years, the increase paid by the homeowner will still be the same.

"The Liberal plan avoids the systemic reform required to ensure property assessments are transparent and fair." That's from the St. Catharines Standard. I'm just reading a comment from them about property assessment.

It's a huge problem. I think that's the first thing that was on my desk when I got elected in 2003 was problems with property assessments. The government plan over

there was, "Oh, let's look into it. Let's get a plan, then let's freeze it while things are being implemented."

The member from Erie-Lincoln brought forward a good resolution to property assessments—a very positive response across the province—of establishing a 5% cap on property assessment increases for as long as the individual owns their home, including the transfer from one spouse to the other—very reasonable. I've got a lot of seniors and people on fixed incomes in my riding who can't afford to stay in their homes. It's awful. Affordable housing—we don't have enough affordable housing for them to go to. They are between a rock and a hard place.

Increasing electricity rates, increasing property taxes are forcing seniors and hard-working families and low-income families out of their homes. It's awful.

We have to have a better plan for Ontario. That's what we've seen consistently in this government: no plan; broken promises; say anything to get elected; spend, spend, spend. Where is the strategy? The people of Ontario deserve better.

I have to wrap up my comments on the budget. I have so much more to say, but we can say it yet again, hopefully in a time to come. Thank you very much for your attention this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ferreira: I'm glad to be able to follow the wise words of the member for Victoria-Haliburton-Brock. Did I get that right?

Ms. Scott: Yes, you did.

Mr. Ferreira: Yes, and commend her for her actions, jumping to the rescue earlier today.

I have to say, this is my second consecutive tour of House duty on a Thursday afternoon and I'm rather enjoying the camaraderie and perhaps the rambunctiousness of the place as we head into the weekend. It certainly makes me feel warm and fuzzy and glad to contribute in any way I can.

This morning we know that members from the government side scurried and scampered across our city to various transit stops, subway stops, to try to sell their budget. I thought it was quite telling that what they were selling was contained on a postcard-sized piece of paper—pretty flimsy, if you ask me. What they were trying to sell, quite frankly, the people of Toronto, the people of Ontario and certainly the people of my riding of York South-Weston are not buying, because it is a flimsy budget. It is a budget that does not address the real needs of Ontarians.

I want to spend most of my time this afternoon speaking about housing. Housing is one of my critic areas and it's an issue that I've taken great interest in, not just since my election, but also before.

I want to start off with a story of why it is that we need considerable investment in affordable housing in Ontario today. I want to convey the story of a constituent of mine who lives on Keele Street. She came from Somalia in the early 1990s with her husband and her three young children. Shortly after they arrived, her husband sadly and unfortunately suddenly passed away and left her a widow with three young children.

My constituent works very hard. She's a personal support worker. She's a caregiver. In fact, she works two jobs to try to support her children, who are now in their—the eldest is 16, the youngest is 12 or 13. She works very hard to provide for these children, to provide them with nourishing food and with a good roof over their heads, and she struggles.

After her husband passed away, after his untimely passing, she realized she needed to get affordable housing to be able to make ends meet on a monthly basis, and back in 1995 she applied for affordable housing in the city of Toronto. Now, 1995 was 12 years ago. My constituent today is still waiting for her affordable housing unit and she is desperately trying to hang on. She's got three growing children—grown children; teenagers—and they are forced to live in a two-bedroom unit that costs \$1,100 per month, and that eats up a tremendous portion of her monthly earnings.

When we talk about this budget being flimsy, it's flimsy because it does not address the needs of this constituent of mine. I am certain that this story can be echoed in many other places across this province. Indeed, it can be echoed in many homes in my riding. We know that presently in Ontario more than 120,000 households are on a waiting list for affordable housing. In the city of Toronto alone that list is about 70,000. So what do we have? We have a government that was in opposition in 2003 and that campaigned on a promise—among many others—to build 20,000 units of affordable housing.

1740

I would have expected that between 2003 and 2007, within the mandate they received—it makes sense—the province of Ontario would get the 20,000 units of affordable housing that this government campaigned on, that they promised. But what have we seen instead? We heard earlier this afternoon from one of the members, I believe it was the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Housing. I believe he quoted a figure of 6,500. I studied journalism, not mathematics, but I can conclude that 6,500 is only about a third of 20,000—only a third. When you score 33%, usually that means a failing grade; at least that's the way it was when I was still in school. So what this government is saying, essentially, is that they deserve a failing grade in terms of delivering on their affordable housing commitment in 2003.

Now, they have made much—and I'm sure this morning at the subway stations, at the transit stops, they were making much and they were saying much, handing out their flimsy postcards—about the so-called money that they are putting forward for housing. They've quoted some kind of figure, \$392 million, that was in this budget: "In this budget we are providing..." That was the figure. That is entirely, completely, 100% federal money. To add, there is no provincial money there—not one cent, not one iota of provincial money—to address the glaring and urgent need for affordable housing. What really adds insult to injury here is that this money could have been used by this province well before the announcement was made in the budget in late March.

I should add that the real source of this money was my party's contribution to the federal budget back in 2005, when my colleagues in Ottawa worked very hard to ensure that Canadians received good value from their federal government, the government of the day in Ottawa. If the members of this House will recall, it was a series of bold initiatives by the federal New Democrats in Ottawa that crafted a very progressive, forward-looking budget in Ottawa, a federal budget that looked after the needs of many Canadians and included the \$392 million in federal housing money that is now, finally, after a year and a half, two years of much squabbling between this provincial government and their federal counterparts—but that was the origin, the genesis of that money.

The government has decided to roll out the money in a curious way. Perhaps it shouldn't surprise this House. The way that the government has decided to roll out this money, where they give out \$100 here and there through some kind of allowance that barely meets the needs of anyone needing affordable housing—in fact, their plan violates the federal government's operating principles for how this money should be spent. Just today, the Wellesley Institute, a non-partisan think tank that looks at important issues of the day, put out a release. They've been doing some good research into this, and I'm going to read from this:

"Ontario's \$185-million housing allowance plan, announced in the 2007 provincial budget on March 22 and funded entirely with federal affordable housing trust fund dollars, violates the operating principles tabled by federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty in the House of Commons in May of 2006. The federal housing dollars were authorized by Parliament in Bill C-48"—that was the NDP budget amendment—"in June of 2005. The money was intended to increase the supply of affordable housing, including off-reserve aboriginal housing."

It goes on to say:

"Ontario's share of the affordable housing trust fund dollars was \$312 million (plus \$80 million for off-reserve aboriginal housing), but the money was delayed by a federal-provincial squabble."

Then, later on in their release of today they say quite succinctly:

"In addition to concerns about the adequacy of the Ontario program, the provincial plan contradicts the federal operating principles."

So what we have is this government's made-on-the-fly housing policy, which perhaps was made on the back of one of those flimsy postcards that they handed out at various transit stops and subway stops in Toronto this morning. In fact, their plan goes against the federal provisions on how this money can be used, and it falls far from meeting the real needs for affordable housing in this province.

One of those real needs exists in subsidized housing, and specifically repairing subsidized housing across this province. In Toronto alone there is a \$300-million shortfall for essential repairs at Toronto Community Housing Corp. properties—\$300 million just in the city of To-

ronto. In the budget, we hear that the government is going to provide roughly 40% of that sum to build and rehabilitate existing housing. You can tell, \$127 million for the entire province, yet in Toronto alone we're faced with a shortfall of \$300 million.

This is not new. I want to quote a tenant activist and Toronto Community Housing Corp. resident who says this: "For five years we have been waiting for action to address the \$300-million backlog in outstanding capital repairs. We know that the \$127 million for the entire province is insufficient"—

The Acting Speaker: Could the speaker please take his seat.

On March 22, 2007, Mr. Sorbara moved, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

On March 26, 2007, Mr. Tory moved that the motion be amended by deleting the words after "That this House" and adding thereto the following:

"Recognize that the budgetary policy put forward by the Minister of Finance continues the McGuinty government's legacy of broken promises and demands more and more from taxpayers while delivering less and less, and that this House condemns the McGuinty government for:

"Saying anything and paying anything that they think will get them elected;

"Increasing spending by more than \$20 billion since coming to office—an increase of \$750,000 every hour they've been in office—and having no results to show for it;

"Increasing spending by more than \$20 billion since coming to office and still failing to keep a huge number of campaign commitments including, but not limited to:

"—the broken promise to not raise taxes;

"—the broken promise to close coal-fired electricity plants by 2007;

"—the broken promise to balance the budget every year;

"—the broken promise to not add to the waste of taxpayers' dollars;

"—the broken promise to provide children with autism the support and treatment they need;

"—the broken promise to stop school closings;

"—the broken promise to ensure 75% of students meet or exceed the provincial standard on province-wide tests within their first mandate;

"—the broken promise to implement a hard cap of 20 students for early grades;

"—the broken promise to provide a new funding formula for rural and northern schools;

"—the broken promise to cap hydro rates at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour until 2006;

"—the broken promise to make the Ministry of Agriculture a lead ministry;

"—the broken promise to eliminate barriers to foreign-trained professionals within one year;

"—the broken promise to spend \$6,000 more per year for individuals in long-term care;

"—the broken promise to unclog emergency rooms;

"—the broken promise to divert 60% of municipal solid waste by 2005;

"—the broken promise to roll back tolls on Highway 407;

"—the broken promise to build 20,000 new affordable housing units;

"—the broken promise to create tens of thousands of new child care spaces; and

"—the broken promise to tackle gridlock.

"Continuing this government's ad hoc, one-off approach to funding key priorities, including a \$50-million last-minute handout to Magna when less than 24 hours later it was announced they were part of a \$4.7-billion bid to purchase DaimlerChrysler;

"Referring to tax relief as nothing but 'trinkets and baubles' for hard-working Ontario taxpayers, yet maintaining the government's long-standing practice of rushing money out the door at fiscal year-end to fund pet projects;

"Failing to provide tax relief to middle-class Ontarians despite manufactured deficits and massive spending increases over and above what was contained in their 2003 election platform;

"Overseeing the loss of more than 120,000 manufacturing jobs in the province and failing to respond to a motion passed in this House calling for a comprehensive jobs strategy; and

"Failing to provide the strong leadership to make the important decisions that will deliver results to the people of Ontario.

"Therefore, the government has lost the confidence of this House."

The first question to be decided is the amendment to the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr. Tory's amendment to the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Pursuant to the earlier agreement of the House, this vote is deferred until Tuesday, April 10, 2007, during deferred votes.

It being approximately 6 p.m. of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 10, 2007.

The House adjourned at 1754.

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No. 154A

N° 154A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 10 April 2007

Mardi 10 avril 2007

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Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 10 April 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): When will the Lottogate blame game end? The Premier and the minister responsible for the integrity of Ontario's lottery games steadfastly refuse to accept any responsibility.

The first move of the OLG in addressing the evidence of insider fraud was to try to blame the CBC. Within days of The Fifth Estate story on Bob Edmonds being broadcast, four individuals with direct ties to the Premier were busily crafting a communications plan to discredit the report by hiring a statistical analyst to refute the numbers. Jim Warren, fresh from the Premier's office, long-time McGuinty advisers Bob Lopinski and Warren Kinsella, and of course Liberal campaign chair Don Guy were involved in the damage control.

The people of Ontario didn't buy their communication strategy, so the next move in the Liberal blame game was to get rid of Ontario Lottery and Gaming's CEO Duncan Brown and hope that offering him up as a scapegoat before the release of the Ombudsman's report would relieve the McGuinty government of its responsibility. No dice, as a gambling person might say. The headlines and breakfast table talk of average Ontarians still demonstrate that this province is not in the mood to be fooled again by the McGuinty team.

So in a desperately low attempt to change the channel, the Premier personally lashes out at the 140,000 employees of convenience stores across Ontario, saying they just can't be trusted. Will the Premier finally admit that it is his government that holds ultimate responsibility for its own failures? Will he, today, finally deliver the apology to all retailers and convenience store workers, who deserve it?

KARYNE MAISONNEUVE

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): Récemment, j'ai entendu parler d'un projet formidable commencé par une famille qui habite dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa–Orléans. Le but est d'introduire une source d'énergie renouvelable pour une école secondaire à Orléans. Le

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 10 avril 2007

projet est inspiré par une petite fille très courageuse qui s'appelle Karyne Maisonneuve.

Two and a half years ago, Karyne was diagnosed with cancer. Her family says she never lost her smile or her love of life as she courageously endured various treatments and numerous operations. But the efforts to save Karyne's life did not succeed. She died in her mother's arms in June 2006.

Karyne's family came to believe that her cancer was partly caused by pollution and other environmental concerns. Having reached that conclusion, the Maisonneuves decided to turn the tragic loss of their beloved daughter and sister into a project that will benefit the environment.

Marc, Paul et Élyse, les frères et la sœur de Karyne, sont étudiants à l'école secondaire Gisèle-Lalonde à Orléans. Avec l'aide des professeurs et des étudiants à l'école Gisèle-Lalonde, la famille Maisonneuve s'est fixé comme objectif de faire installer cette année un système de panneaux solaires et une éolienne sur le toit de l'école.

The initiative is known as Project Karyne and is currently searching for sponsors and partners to raise the necessary \$40,000 to \$50,000 to complete this environmentally friendly project.

Je voudrais féliciter la famille Maisonneuve, ainsi que les élèves et les professeurs à l'école Gisèle-Lalonde, pour leur courage et leur détermination en développant un tel projet au nom de Karyne.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): The convenience store owners deserve respect for the hard work and long hours they contribute to the economy of Ontario. Instead, the Premier heaps scorn on these people by blaming them for his government's Lottogate scandal.

Jean-Luc Meunier, vice-president, central Canada, for Mac's Convenience Stores Inc., notes the obvious irony of the Premier's damning retailers for the failures of his government's own program and rightly points out that the issue is not their competence or their morality. He's too polite to say what I've been hearing from retailers in my riding, but they go much further and ask what right the Premier has to accuse them of failing in their responsibilities when the Premier's only concern has been protecting his incompetent minister responsible for the mess by focusing on a communications strategy rather than taking real action to fix the problem.

All of these store owners are disappointed by Dalton McGuinty's remarks that they can't be trusted, according

to Dave Bryans, the president of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association. He expressed the hope that the Premier will reconsider his comments and give convenience store operators an apology. Elaine Abbas, who with her husband has owned and operated their store for almost 27 years, paid all their taxes, purchased various licences and complied to the letter of the law in all areas, all the while raising three children and working 14 hours a day, seven days a week, is insulted. She writes, "While Mr. McGuinty may question our integrity, our customers know us." She is absolutely correct. And now, with his stubborn refusal to offer his overdue apology to Ontario's 10,000 convenience store operators and 140,000 employees, all the people of Ontario know how the Premier lacks integrity and downright decency and respect for the hard-working people of Ontario.

UKRAINIAN CANADIAN SOCIAL SERVICES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): Today I want to highlight the work of a wonderful organization in Parkdale–High Park, that of the Ukrainian Canadian Social Services, an organization having its roots from after the Second World War.

They provide a drop-in centre all day Monday to Friday, including Internet access. They provide arts and crafts groups, bingo and a marvellous seniors' club on Wednesday, and on Friday a discussion and debate group. A traditional New Year's Eve celebration, Malanka, takes place under their auspices in January, and in the summer, day trips are arranged. Skilled counsellors and countless volunteers assist all year round with referrals, counselling, emergency food and financial aid, clothing, furniture and visits.

I was delighted to be able to contribute my raise in March to this example of community responsibility and involvement. Congratulations to the Ukrainian Canadian Social Services Association for over 50 years of service in Parkdale–High Park.

RICK SHAVER

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): Today I rise to congratulate Rick Shaver, the general manager and co-founder of the Seaway News, on his recent election as president of the Ontario Community Newspapers Association.

Rick was a student in my very first class at Viscount Alexander Public School back in 1969. He was active in school life then and remains a positive force in the community now. As just one example of his dedication to the community, he recently co-organized a very successful first annual Cystic Fibrosis East Front Literacy Campaign pizza party, which raised more than \$17,000 for these two causes.

1340

While there are many accomplishments of Rick's that I could talk about, I want to focus today on his weekly

newspaper, the Seaway News. Rick founded this paper back in 1985 with his colleague Dick Aubry. Since then, the Seaway News has brought important local stories to its readers on a weekly basis. To quote Rick's acceptance speech, "We tell the stories of our community, the stories of our readers. In our papers, the school bake sale doesn't have to fight for a space against the war in Afghanistan."

Community papers bring the news that is closest to readers' hearts, and there will always be a place for them in Ontario. I want to commend the Ontario Community Newspapers Association for the work it does and congratulate their new president, Rick Shaver.

As well, if I might, I would like to wish Rick an early happy birthday and also congratulate him on his 25th wedding anniversary with his wife, Brenda.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): From day one of the OLG scandal, the McGuinty government has refused to provide answers to our questions in this House. They have worried more about managing public relations than solving the problem. Within days of The Fifth Estate exposing this scandal, the action the McGuinty government took was not to investigate the high level of insider wins but to bring in spin doctors to do damage control.

The minister denied ever knowing there was fraud even though insider wins were a hot topic among senior OLG staff starting in August 2005, almost two years ago; even though the minister's chief of staff talked to the OLG about the CBC's freedom-of-information request in April 2006, one year ago. The minister claims he doesn't know anything about freedom-of-information requests in his ministry even though we know he has personally denied our own FOI requests.

If the people of Ontario are to have any faith in the integrity of the lottery system, they need an independent investigation to ensure accountability and transparency. If you have nothing to hide, why don't you call an inquiry?

ARTHUR CURRIE

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): Born on a farm at Napperton, just outside Strathroy, Ontario, Sir Arthur Currie has been described as being an unlikely soldier, having had no professional military training when he enlisted in 1914, at the age of 38. But within three years he became lieutenant general and the first Canadian commander of all four divisions of the Canadian corps.

Currie was a brilliant and daring battlefield strategist. He distinguished himself as one of the key architects of the Vimy Ridge assault in 1917, when the Canadian corps won the first unequivocal allied victory, with Currie as lieutenant colonel of Canada's first division. After being promoted to Canadian commander, he led his soldiers through the remaining days of World War I. For

his efforts, he was knighted in 1918 by King George V. After the war he served as Inspector General of the Canadian militia and became the first general of the Canadian army. In 1920 he became principal and vice-chancellor of McGill University, where he remained until his death in 1933.

This Thursday, students at Strathroy District Collegiate Institute, where Currie was a graduate, will be joined by members of Strathroy's Sir Arthur Currie branch of the Royal Canadian Legion to commemorate Vimy Ridge and the rise of a local farm boy who became what many historians say was the best military commander that Canada has ever produced.

DIABETES

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): I think most of us in this Legislature realize that health care, along with the environment, are two of the top priorities of most Ontarians, and as legislators we spend much of our time dealing with these issues.

Diabetes and its complications is a serious ongoing public health issue. Currently 1.3 million Canadians, or 5% of the population, have diabetes, 800,000 of those being in Ontario. It is expected that there will be 60,000 new cases diagnosed annually in our province. This has serious implications for our publicly funded health care system.

Recently I had the opportunity to compete in a marathon in Rome, Italy, on behalf of the Canadian Diabetes Association. Many who participated fund-raised for the association, but more importantly helped to raise awareness of this impending health problem that is already a challenge to our health care system.

I would especially like to congratulate Thunder Bay team members John Trevisanutto, Trevor Clinker, Karen Dahl, Cheryl Ritchie, Tiffany Miller, Dennis Delyea, Cara Petrone, Jack Wagenaar and trainer Sandy Guthrie, who, in addition to raising awareness, raised \$55,000.

Our government understands the seriousness of this issue, as demonstrated by the establishment of an Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative, the Northern Diabetes Health Network, adding two new drugs to the ODB to treat type 2 diabetes and, of course, becoming the first province to fully fund insulin pumps for children as well as several other initiatives.

Our government gets it when it comes to health care and diabetes in the province of Ontario.

HYDRO ONE

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): I rise in the Legislature to recognize the hard work and devotion of the Hydro One crews that helped to restore power to many communities in the riding of Huron–Bruce that were devastated by winter storms early last month.

Because of the storms, over 24,000 Hydro One customers were without power, in large part due to downed hydro lines which were caused by severe winter

weather conditions. However, thanks to the tremendous team effort put forth by Hydro One management, over 150 extra line workers and engineers, along with additional help from the Ministry of Transportation and the county of Bruce, the situation was rectified.

However, this work did not go unnoticed, as the Hydro One maintenance crews responsible were honoured with the prestigious international Emergency Recovery Award. This award is presented in recognition of outstanding efforts in restoring electrical service that has been disrupted by severe weather conditions or other natural events.

While the damage in the area was vast, the hard work and swift action by Hydro One helped to limit the inconvenience to the residents throughout the area. Hydro One proved that when a government agency has an immense task at hand, the results are often an example of some of the finest dedication and hard work possible.

I once again express my gratitude to Hydro One for the role they played in repairing and restoring power to a large part of the riding of Huron–Bruce.

VISITORS

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to take a moment to introduce some very special people in our gallery today in the west end.

I'm extremely pleased to introduce a former colleague of this House, MPP Ray Haggerty from Fort Erie. Welcome.

I'm also pleased to introduce two teachers, Giorgio Fragnito and Andrew Crober, who are here with their students from Fort Erie Secondary School, who have come to watch how we conduct ourselves in a very professional and orderly manner. Welcome.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, another special guest from Fort Erie is the president of Shorewalk, who is here with a large number of people to hear about the bill that's being introduced shortly by myself. Welcome, Garry Skerrett.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to welcome Mr. Mark Nimigan to the House. He's on the Hamilton Police Services Board, and he serves us very well in Hamilton.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GREAT LAKES SHORELINE RIGHT OF PASSAGE ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LE DROIT DE PASSAGE SUR LE LITTORAL DES GRANDS LACS

Mr. Craiton moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 202, An Act to create a right of passage along the shoreline of the Great Lakes / Projet de loi 202, Loi

créant un droit de passage le long du littoral des Grands Lacs.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): This afternoon I take great pleasure in introducing a private member's bill that will benefit all the people of Ontario who enjoy the natural beauty of Ontario Great Lakes and bays.

Entitled the Great Lakes Shoreline Right of Passage Act, 2007, this bill when passed will reserve a right of passage along the shorelines of the Great Lakes between the shoreline and the high-water mark. These rights will be limited to passage on foot and are designed to return to Ontario the right Ontarians have always had under British common law: the right to walk on the beautiful beaches of our province.

I also want to add that this bill will not harm any existing rights, property values or personal security, and it will protect adjacent landowners from frivolous liability prosecutions. In fact, it will reaffirm existing littoral and riparian rights, enhance property value by eliminating ambiguity, and, as in other jurisdictions, the presence of people will deter crime and vandalism.

It is time to return the shorelines and the beaches to the citizens of Ontario. I would ask the House to support this bill.

Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David

Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Gregory S.
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Ferreira, Paul
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea

Hudak, Tim
Klees, Frank
MacLeod, Lisa
Martel, Shelley
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Prue, Michael

Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Tabuns, Peter
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tory, John
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 60; the nays are 25.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 10, 2007, and Wednesday, April 11, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 306. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1352 to 1357.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte

Parsons, Emie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ÉDUCATION AUTOCHTONE

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Since we were elected in 2003, we have taken enormous strides in publicly funded education in Ontario. We're restoring public confidence in the system, and we recognize that there's still more to do.

Last month, the Ontario government announced our education investment for 2007-08, which will be a record \$18.3 billion, an increase of \$781 million over last year. Since 2002-03, funding has increased by \$3.5 billion, the equivalent of more than \$2,000 per student, and we're seeing results. Class sizes are smaller, student achievement is on the rise, and more students are graduating from high school.

À mesure que nous travaillons à améliorer ces résultats, il importe que nous fassions tout en notre pouvoir pour tous nos élèves.

If we're going to reach every student, we need to continue to improve opportunities for our First Nation, Metis and Inuit students. That's why I'm pleased to announce that this year we are introducing a new grant as part of our overall education funding. This new grant, the First Nations, Métis and Inuit education supplement, is expected to provide northern school boards with more than \$5 million in 2007-08 to support aboriginal students in our publicly funded schools.

Applause.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: It's a very good thing. The grant will provide more than \$10.5 million to school boards province-wide. The new supplement is in addition to \$12.7 million invested in 2007 to support the implementation of the First Nation, Metis and Inuit education policy framework.

La subvention offre aux conseils scolaires des fonds pour soutenir les programmes qui aident les élèves autochtones.

It will help increase funding for native language programs offered in any of the seven native languages recognized in the Ontario curriculum, and the investment will provide more funding to help boards offer any of the native studies courses available in the Ontario curriculum. Courses like these enable aboriginal students to reconnect with their cultures and histories and also provide opportunities for all students to learn more about aboriginal people.

If we want to support achievement among aboriginal students, it is essential that they feel welcome and engaged in school and that they see themselves reflected and appreciated in the curriculum and school community.

It's actually been an exciting few months for aboriginal education in this province. In January, we announced our aboriginal education strategy with the launch of the First Nation, Metis and Inuit education policy framework. It will be a foundation for delivering quality education to aboriginal students who attend provincially funded schools in Ontario. It sets out strategies for the ministry, school boards and schools, strategies like putting more aboriginal staff in schools and encouraging teaching strategies that are appropriate to aboriginal learners. In November, we are holding a conference that will give educators a chance to come together and discuss how we can implement the framework and better support aboriginal students.

Our Six Ways website, which provides information about new programs in Ontario's high schools, is now available in five aboriginal languages: Algonquin, Ojibwa, Oji-Cree, Mohawk and Swampy Cree.

To further enhance support for our aboriginal students, the newly created Aboriginal Education Office at the Ministry of Education is now fully staffed, and half of the staff are aboriginal educators in the field.

Our aboriginal education strategy gives us the impetus to build upon this energy and carry it across the province to ensure that we are recognizing and meeting the needs of our First Nation, Metis and Inuit students, whether they are living in remote areas or in urban centres.

En collaborant avec les familles, les parents et les communautés autochtones, nous appuierons chaque élève, and we will enable our First Nation, Metis and Inuit students to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to complete their education and move on to future successes.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to respond to the statement by the Minister of Education.

This investment in aboriginal education is good news for the First Nations communities throughout the province that are struggling to maintain an education system that is troubled with a lack of funding, aging infrastructure, and much-needed space.

Our current Lieutenant Governor is living proof of what a difference education and educational opportunity and literacy can make for those people living on reserves and for those aboriginals. Just recently, I had the opportunity to read one of his books, *Out of Muskoka*, and from reading that book learned a lot of his early years. I'm immensely proud of our Lieutenant Governor. He points out in his book how a wealthy American whose cottage he was helping to maintain in the summertime as a teenager sponsored him into his post-secondary education. You only need see where he is today, the wonderful achievements he has had in his life and the immense amount of good he is doing in his post as Lieutenant Governor for aboriginal and First Nations people around Ontario to demonstrate how education can be such a fantastic thing for aboriginal peoples.

I note that the Lieutenant Governor has just recently—he has written a few more books, but the most recent one is called *Raisin Wine*. It is about a boyhood in a different Muskoka. I'm sure, if it's half as interesting as his first book, it would be a very good read, and it supports a good cause as well.

Of course, our Lieutenant Governor has also had a number of projects he has been involved with, some very successful projects of getting books for remote First Nations. As I said, I'm proud of him for all the work that he has done. He knows from his own personal experience what a difference literacy and education can make in the opportunities for our aboriginal peoples.

While the announcement is good news, it is only a small step in the right direction. Much more needs to be done by the government to assist First Nations communities that are struggling with Third World conditions with respect to education, health and safety. The McGuinty government wants Ontarians to believe that they are supporting our First Nations communities. This announcement and their new aboriginal policy framework are meant to improve the conditions of our aboriginal communities, but this is far from the reality. Under this government and under the new and improved aboriginal framework, First Nation communities across Ontario are struggling with deplorable living conditions. We have disasters and serious concerns such as the ongoing events at Caledonia and the devastating events that have occurred at Kashechewan. This government continues to enforce policies, such as the new mining tax initiative, that work to negatively impact upon First Nations communities. You just need to look at Pikangikum and the conditions there. This remote northwestern Ojibway reserve is a good example of the

conditions that First Nations people live under. They live in tiny wood-framed homes with no bathtubs and no toilets. The community does not have enough houses for a population that has doubled in the past 20 years. Some of these tiny, dilapidated houses are home to as many as 18 people. The one-storey clapboard school, built in 1986 for 250 students, has 780 students from JK to grade 12. Makeshift classrooms have been set up in portable trailers, as well as in the library and the storage room. Pikangikum is one of three reserves in Ontario with a drinking water crisis. This year alone, there have been 23 suicides on the 49 Nishnawbe reserves, including six in Pikangikum. This is the reality for most First Nations communities throughout the province.

1410

You just need to look at today's Globe and Mail to see the way this government is treating aboriginal communities. The headline is "Native Community Decries 'Tax Grab' at Diamond Mine—Ontario's New 13% Levy 'Lose-Lose' for First Nations, Chief Tells Government." This is a tax that was just implemented in the recent budget, with no consultation with or warning to the affected aboriginal communities, and, I might add, no warning to De Beers, the mining company that is opening this \$1-billion project. The representative of De Beers last week here at Queen's Park said this may be the only diamond mine that ever opens in Ontario because of this Third World taxation policy that was brought in with no warning to the First Nations or to De Beers, which are investing all this money to provide jobs and opportunity for our remote First Nations communities.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora—Rainy River): I am pleased to be able to respond to yet another attempt by the McGuinty government to pat itself on the back over education funding: a McGuinty government that says that class sizes are getting smaller, while in fact in the intermediate grades class sizes are exploding; a McGuinty government that says that student achievement is up, but when we talk to teachers, they say the EQAO test has been made easier.

But I in particular want to pay attention to this latest attempt by the McGuinty government to pat itself on the back, because while the McGuinty government tries to boast about funding for aboriginal students, when you look at those boards which actually have a lot of aboriginal students attending, most of those have had their budgets cut.

Let me give you an example: the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board. The McGuinty government pats itself on the back and says, "We're providing the school board with money for aboriginal education," but in fact, when you look at all the numbers, this board's budget has been cut by over \$120,000 over the last two years. So even as the McGuinty government shuffles money from one envelope to another, this board has less money for its schools, its students and its teachers than it had two years ago. What does this mean? Well, it means that in fact one of the schools in this board that has predominantly Metis

and First Nations students is being closed. The Wabigoon Public School is listed for closure by this board because the board says, "We simply don't have enough money to operate our schools." Some 75% of the students at the Wabigoon Public School are Metis or First Nations students. They will have to now travel 25 kilometres and in some cases 30 kilometres to school in Dryden. The McGuinty government says this is progress. I think the people who send their children to the Wabigoon Public School would beg to differ.

Then there is the Lakehead District School Board. Everyone knows Thunder Bay has an increasing aboriginal population. The McGuinty government boasts that it is going to provide \$177,000 in funding for aboriginal education for the Lakehead District School Board this year. However, when you look at the big numbers, the Lakehead District School Board is now receiving \$2.3 million less in funding from the McGuinty government as compared to two years ago. How is cutting \$2.3 million out of a school board with increasing aboriginal student enrolment a good thing for aboriginal students?

Then there's the board I used to teach at, the Rainy River District School Board, which will receive—and the McGuinty government boasts about this—about \$340,000 from the aboriginal education supplement. But when you look at the big numbers, the board is down \$125,000 from what it was at two years ago, which means in the overall picture less money for more need.

Then there's the Superior-Greenstone District School Board, which has received \$55,000 from the aboriginal education supplement, but it also is down by \$2 million from what it received two years ago.

So while the McGuinty government boasts, school board after school board that has significant aboriginal students attending is receiving less and less money. In many cases they are being forced to close schools which have a significant, if not a majority, aboriginal student population. But the McGuinty government thinks that as long as they confine the message to Toronto, they can boast about this.

Let me tell you that parents in Wabigoon aren't happy. They're angry. They're angry about losing a school that was focused on aboriginal students and Metis students. Parents from First Nation and Metis communities who are being forced to bus their kids 30 and 40 kilometres because the McGuinty government is closing their school are not happy. Parents who know that, overall, the school board budget has been cut—in some cases by \$2 million—see through this as well.

This means that these boards, which will have to operate schools, to pay for teachers, to pay for caretaking and for heating in the schools, actually will have less money from the McGuinty government than they had two years ago. I say that at a time when aboriginal students need more help, it is actually shameful that they are being cut in funding.

DEFERRED VOTES

2007 ONTARIO BUDGET

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have a deferred vote on Mr. Tory's amendment to the budget motion.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1416 to 1421.

The Speaker: All those in favour of Mr. Tory's amendment to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Ferreira, Paul
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea

Hudak, Tim
Klees, Frank
MacLeod, Lisa
Martel, Shelley
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Prue, Michael

Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Tabuns, Peter
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tory, John
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Craiton, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldeep
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David

Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Qadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Gregory S.
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 26; the nays are 62.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

We now come to the motion of Mr. Sorbara that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1425 to 1430.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Craiton, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldeep
Levac, Dave
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David

Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Qadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Gregory S.
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Ferreira, Paul
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea

Hudak, Tim
Klees, Frank
MacLeod, Lisa
Martel, Shelley
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Prue, Michael

Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Tabuns, Peter
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tory, John
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 62; the nays are 27.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It is therefore resolved that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONVENIENCE STORES

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier and it concerns the lottery scandal. Last week, the Premier attempted yet again to dodge responsibility for the lottery scandal by putting blame on convenience store owners. It's always somebody, and on this occasion it was the convenience store owners. In his comments he tarred thousands of hard-working small business people with sweeping, careless statements which suggested that all convenience store people were involved somehow in the lottery scandal and would do the same with alcohol.

Will the Premier take this opportunity to apologize to the 140,000 convenience store employees he collectively insulted with his irresponsible comments?

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Read your own quotes, John.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Minister of Health. We're not off to a good start.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Let me first take this opportunity on behalf of the government to thank those men and women who devote themselves to providing convenient products at convenient times for the people of Ontario on an ongoing basis. In many ways, people who work in convenience stores, and particularly the people who own and operate those convenience stores, are part of the backbone of this economy. They employ over 100,000 people and they provide a very important service to the people of Ontario. Let me say on behalf of our government that we greatly appreciate those services offered by those people, day in and day out.

Mr. Tory: Well, of course, no surprise there: no apology, just as there's been a complete failure on the part of this Premier and this government to take any responsibility whatsoever for anything to do with the lottery scandal.

The Premier should stand in his place and have the decency to apologize and just admit that his latest attempt last week to deflect responsibility for the lottery scandal onto hard-working small business people was a complete failure and was a mistake to begin with—people like Elaine Abbas of Ottawa. She, with her husband, has owned and operated a convenience store for nearly 27 years, working 14 hours a day, seven days a week. She says, "Shame on Mr. McGuinty for blaming all small businesses for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. scandal involving a few unscrupulous retailers. To lump us all together is disgusting. He owes us an apology and, believe me, the next election results will reflect whether or not we get one."

Will the Premier just get up and admit your comments were wrong and apologize to these 140,000 people whom you tarred with a dirty brush? Will you do it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I've just taken the opportunity to express on behalf of our government and indeed the people of Ontario our appreciation for the wonderful services provided by people who work in our convenience stores. But let me remind all Ontarians of something the leader of the Conservative Party said on November 23 of last year: "Ontario should consider banning lottery retailers from buying tickets in light of mounting accusations that clerks are winning a disproportionate number of prizes." Not even the Ombudsman suggested that the right to buy those tickets should be removed from those people who work in our convenience stores, but the leader of the official opposition decided he was going to take it one step further and, with one wide stroke of a reckless brush, accused all people who work in our convenience stores of being unworthy of the responsibility they assume and the right to buy those tickets.

Mr. Tory: The vice-president of Mac's Convenience Stores, Jean-Luc Meunier, calls it an irony that this Premier should try to damn retailers for his own government's failures. He says, "The hard work and long hours

that convenience store workers contribute to the Ontario economy deserve more respect."

Dave Bryans, president of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association, says, "It's not often that a Premier unfairly questions the credibility of an entire industry and its 140,000 workers." He goes on to say that it's unfair to tar all convenience store owners for the lottery problems. "We hope," he says, "that the Premier will reconsider his comments and give convenience store operators an apology."

Will you stand in your place today and apologize for your comments that unfairly tarred this group of 140,000 hard-working small business people?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: But there's more. The leader of the official opposition also said, "Is it more important to let those 140,000 people buy their tickets and have some of the revenue from that than it is to maintain the integrity of the system? I think that integrity always comes first."

The logical inference from that is that the leader of the official opposition is saying that you cannot have people who are working in convenience stores operating these lottery systems and have integrity in the system at the same time. We disagree. We have every faith and every confidence in our convenience store workers to continue doing the good job they've been doing on behalf of the people of Ontario.

1440

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. We have asked your government in connection with the lottery scandal to turn over all the documents from the minister's office and your office concerning the lottery scandal and you've said no. We've asked that an independent investigation be ordered into the activities of the Premier's office and the minister's office concerning the lottery scandal and you have said no.

There are 103 of us elected here. The committee process should represent another means by which the public can get some information as to what went on and we can reinforce the role of the member of provincial Parliament. In fact, in your 2003 election platform you said, "We will give more independence and powers to legislative committees." Will the Premier consider referring the lottery scandal issues not presently being investigated by the police—namely, the actions of your office, the minister's office and the government of Ontario itself—to a committee of the Legislature for proper investigation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'll remind the leader of the official opposition that the OLG was before a committee in September. I will also remind him of something which he is uncomfortable in understanding and accepting, and that is this: First of all, KPMG was brought in to provide

some independent recommendations. It did that. The leader of the official opposition is not prepared to accept their independence. Then the Ombudsman came in and he provided a very thorough report complete with a substantive set of recommendations. Beyond that, we've now referred this matter to the Ontario Provincial Police.

It seems to me that this issue is heavily populated now with independent authorities offering independent investigations and independent recommendations. That may not satisfy the leader of the official opposition, but I think it does satisfy the people of Ontario, who are most intent on ensuring that we move forward and act on each and every one of these recommendations. That is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Tory: The people of Ontario are much smarter than the Premier gives them credit for, in that what the people of Ontario know is that not one authority—independent or otherwise—of any kind has as yet examined the activities of your government, your minister, your office and your advisers in all of this because you steadfastly refuse to let anybody look at them and stonewall day after day. It's unfortunate that your promise to give a meaningful role to MPPs and committees was obviously as meaningless as all the other promises in that platform.

In 1986, then-Premier David Peterson accepted the resignation of Elinor Caplan. In accepting that resignation, he said two interesting things. First, "A minister of the crown has to have the confidence of the House in order to carry on." Second, he said that it was best that the matter in question be probed by a legislative committee and not dragged on in the House. Those were two statements made by your predecessor. Will you take the advice and the words of your predecessor as some guidance and refer this matter of your government's actions, your office's and the minister's office on the lottery scandal to a committee of this Legislature?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I want to remind the leader of the official opposition that it was the Conservative government that stopped calling agencies before our parliamentary committees. We opened the door again to that.

I'm not exactly sure what the leader of the official opposition's objective is, but it is surely not to ensure that we restore confidence for the people of Ontario in their lottery system. I think what Ontarians want to know and are entitled to know is whether or not their government is doing everything that it should do to restore confidence in the integrity of their lottery system.

We have received solid recommendations from KPMG and the Ombudsman. We've taken an additional step, referring this to the Ontario Provincial Police, and we look forward to any findings, any recommendations, anything at all that might flow from their involvement in this issue.

Again, we will do whatever is necessary to ensure that the people of Ontario can have confidence in their lottery system, and specifically we will adopt each and every one of—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: We should just amend that. Everything short of actually having anybody at all look at what your government did or did not do, when you knew things, what you did when you knew them and so forth—anything short of that, and if you wanted to do everything you should be doing, then you should look at precedent. I cited the precedent involving—

Interjection: It was Elinor Caplan.

Mr. Tory:—Ms. Caplan.

We have a second precedent in a majority government setting in 1992, when a legislative committee looked into matters concerning the member for Nickel Belt. A third precedent: that of René Fontaine, a former minister in the Peterson government. His matters were referred to a committee. The committee hearings took place relatively quickly in 1986. They were cited at the time for being cost-effective, and it allowed the public to see what was going on and enhanced the role of the MPP.

With all of those advantages, and your having said you want to do everything you should do to restore confidence, why won't you refer this to a legislative committee and let the public see what your government did, what it knew concerning this lottery scandal?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: This matter was brought before a parliamentary committee. Secondly, in each and every one of those instances, unless my memory fails me, I don't recall there having been a separate KPMG recommendation put forward, I don't recall the Ombudsman having looked into it, and I don't recall the government of the day having referred the matter to the Ontario Provincial Police.

If ever there was a government that's committed to doing the right thing, to ensuring that we follow up on every specific recommendation that we get from every independent authority, it is ours. Our word that we give to the people of Ontario, the hundreds of thousands who go out there and buy their lottery tickets, is that we will adopt each and every one of these recommendations so that they can have every confidence in the integrity of their lottery system.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. On March 24 of this year, your Minister of Health and Long-Term Care promised people that the price tag of the new North Bay Regional Health Centre was \$551 million. He said that that price is guaranteed, and he said, "One of the new things that we offered in health care infrastructure in Ontario is certainty with respect to pricing."

However, in a letter dated February 21, 2007, signed by Minister Smitherman himself, he says, "The actual total cost of the private, profit-driven hospital deal will be over \$1 billion."

Premier, why was your Minister of Health not forthcoming with North Bay residents and the taxpayers of Ontario? Why did he refuse to acknowledge that under

the profit-driven model, the hospital will cost two times \$500 million, or \$1 billion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I am pleased to report that after 20 years of waiting, the people of North Bay, because of the fabulous work performed by their MPP, are getting a new hospital. More than that, not only are they just getting a physical building, they're getting a 30-year warranty with respect to maintenance and renovations. That will ensure that they have a good, quality hospital in their community for 30 years.

Beyond that, the risk associated with any problems connected with the management of the contract, any costs that might go up with respect to labour or materials, all of that is assumed by the private sector. At the end of the day, the people of North Bay end up with their hospital. It's publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable, and they get a hospital that they've been waiting for for 20 years. We think they've earned it.

Mr. Hampton: Last week we saw where McGuinty's private hydro deal with Bruce nuclear is going to add an extra \$1 billion to people's hydro bills, because we're paying 44% too much. Now the Premier says that a hospital that should cost \$500 million is a good deal when it costs \$1 billion. It's a good deal when the profit-driven corporation gets to line their pockets. It's a good deal when the taxpayers of Ontario have to pay double for a hospital.

Premier, how is it a good deal when the taxpayers have to pay a billion dollars for a hospital that your Minister of Health himself admits should only cost \$500 million to build?

1450

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the people of North Bay are not just getting a building. They get a 30-year warranty with respect to that building, with respect to renovations, with respect to repairs.

There's more good news. We're not just not shutting down hospitals in the way that the previous government did; we're actually building new hospitals in the province of Ontario. We're getting new hospitals in Thunder Bay, Brampton, North Bay, Mattawa, Newmarket, Sault Ste. Marie, Sioux Lookout, Niagara Health System, Halton, Toronto with Bridgepoint, Mississauga and Toronto with the Humber River Regional, West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, Runnymede Health Centre in Toronto, Woodstock General Hospital, and Montfort back in my hometown of Ottawa. That's 15.

There are 85 other hospitals that are undergoing major renovations or expansions. We have in place for the first time in Ontario a government that is dedicated to building hospitals, expanding hospitals, and renovating hospitals to meet the health care needs of the people of Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, here is the issue. Here is your government's press release from March 24 which says the all-in cost of the hospital is \$500 million. Here is the letter from the Minister of Health that was leaked over the weekend, which points out that that hospital that you

say is only going to cost \$500 million, when you add in the private profit, when you add in all the other goodies that the profit-driven corporation is going to get, is going to come to \$1 billion.

I simply say this to you, Premier: Do you really believe it's good health care when the McGuinty government pays a private, profit-driven corporation \$1 billion for a hospital deal when the Minister of Health himself says the hospital should only cost \$500 million? Do you think that's a good deal, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I just made reference to the fact that there are about 100 hospital construction projects underway at present in Ontario. We are, in fact, building more hospitals than the five previous governments combined. I don't believe there was a single new hospital built on the NDP government's watch—not a single one.

But distilled to its essence, what this is really all about is ensuring that we can meet the health care needs of our communities. We've made a determination that it is unacceptable for us to allow this state of disrepair and this lack of hospital capacity in Ontario to continue. We're making some dramatic investments in our health care system, but particularly in our hospital system, so that our population, particularly our elderly population, which has a greater call upon our hospital services, has the lead—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: We saw last week how the hydro ratepayers of the province are going to get fleeced out of \$1 billion thanks to your Bruce nuclear profit-driven private hydro deal, and now we see that people are going to pay an extra \$500 million for your private, profit-driven hospital deal.

In a press release issued April 9 by Infrastructure Ontario, your Minister Caplan, you quote a PricewaterhouseCoopers report. You rely on this report to justify your private, profit-driven hospital deals. Premier, did the PricewaterhouseCoopers report examine the cost for constructing a 100% public hospital instead of going down the private, profit-driven corporate road?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): The member asks about PricewaterhouseCoopers. In fact, earlier on, the Montfort Hospital independent auditor showed over \$19 million worth of savings as compared to a traditional bill. In fact, PricewaterhouseCoopers did look at the alternative financing method compared to a traditional delivery model and concluded a savings of \$56.7 million.

That report will soon be on the Infrastructure Ontario website, and I invite all members of this House, and indeed all Ontarians, to take a look at it and to render their own opinion. But make no mistake: The people of North Bay, Sarnia, Sault Ste. Marie, St. Catharines and many, many other communities are finally getting a hospital with modern, state-of-the-art facilities so that we

can treat people closer to home. I understand that the leader of the third party would wish us to stop, but I want the member to know that I will be relentless in ensuring that Ontarians have access—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: This is the minister who said it was a good deal when people who bought lottery tickets got fleeced out of hundreds of millions of dollars. Now he says it's a good deal when taxpayers pay double for a hospital because the McGuinty government wants to put lots of money in the pockets of their profit-driven, private, corporate friends.

Minister, you keep relying on this Pricewaterhouse report. You keep relying on that, saying this is a good deal. You've commissioned this report, but you refuse to make it public. So my question to the Premier is this: Premier, will you today table the Pricewaterhouse-Cooper's report since you refer to it all the time in saying that it says these profit-driven, private hospitals are a good deal? If the report says that, table the report today so that the taxpayers of Ontario can see how paying a—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I wish that the leader of the third party would listen to the answer to the first question before he goes on with his previously prepared question because, as I very clearly indicated, the Pricewaterhouse-Cooper's report, the value for money report, will soon be posted for everyone to see on the Infrastructure Ontario website, just as the report on the Montfort Hospital is currently online.

One of the hallmarks of this government is transparency, the commitment to letting people know. In fact, I have support here from a former Attorney General in the province who says, "Toronto presents, in the longer term, some interesting possibilities for partnership with private developers. For example, it might be possible to construct courts and to construct commercial space, and to construct housing in co-operation with a private developer."

That was Howard Hampton, October 9, 1991. What happened to Mr. Hampton between then and now? Obviously, he didn't have the same regard for transparency and accountability as this government does—

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: This is the real evidence concerning the McGuinty government. They don't know the difference between leasing space in a vacant building and spending \$1 billion for a hospital that only costs \$500 million to construct. But I say to the Premier again, Premier, you're very fond of quoting from the PricewaterhouseCooper's report. If this report says what you want people to believe, then table the report here today. Otherwise, tell people what you have to hide. What do you have to hide in refusing to table the report, which you say justifies paying \$1 billion for a profit-driven, private hospital deal in North Bay that your Minister of Health says should only cost \$500 million to build? Will you table the report today, Premier?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In response to the first two questions, I'll give the same reply. The report will be on the website in very short order. In fact, the contract with Plenary Health is already posted on a website, as are the requests for proposals, as is the contract. This is a hallmark for transparency and accountability unmatched by any previous government, because those are part of our five core principles: that public interest is paramount; that we have and be able to demonstrate value for money; that appropriate accountability is maintained; that we have a fair, open and transparent procurement process; and most especially, that all infrastructure will remain under public control, and core assets like hospitals, schools and our water system will always be publicly owned. No previous government can make a claim like that because none of them—whether it was the P3 deals that the New Democrats began or that were started under a previous government—has had this kind of framework and this policy foundation. This government believes that the public has a right to know and should be—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

1500

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a question for the Premier. Once again the Premier's Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal has distinguished himself for his failure to watch out for the best interests of Ontario taxpayers. First it was the lottery scandal, a scandal with huge implications to which he paid no attention. Now it's the North Bay hospital, a project that was supposed to cost \$221 million, but thanks to the delays of your government, is actually going to cost about \$1 billion.

My question for the Premier is this: Given this minister's colossal failure to protect the interests of lottery ticket buyers and given his colossal failure to protect the interests of the taxpayer with respect to the costs of the North Bay hospital, doesn't he think it's time for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal to step down?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: It's somewhat ironic that the member would have participated with colleagues in phony groundbreaking in North Bay in the year 2000 and the year 2002. There was not a single penny in the bank. There was not even a plan to deliver and build that hospital until Monique Smith, the member for Nipissing, came tirelessly and ensured that we had the delivery of this hospital. That is the truth and that is the legacy. This member should be ashamed of himself for foisting that fraud upon the people of North Bay and the people of the region, for suggesting the phony, bogus numbers that the member is coming forward with. The reality is this: The hospital, for \$551 million—we have shovels in the ground. The people of North Bay can expect modern medical facilities that finally someone has delivered for them, not only there, of course, but in Sault Ste. Marie, in Sarnia, in St. Catharines, in Hamilton, in Ottawa. Right across this province Ontarians are benefiting from the most ambitious capital program—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Miller: Well, Mr. Minister, this project was to cost \$221 million in 2002. Now—and I might point out that you've been the government for three and a half years—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. I need to be able to hear the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. He needs to be able to place his question.

Mr. Miller: To the Premier: Premier, this project was to cost some \$221 million in 2002. You've been the government for three and a half years. For three and a half years the people of North Bay have been waiting for this hospital to get going. Now we find out that the minister responsible for lotteries, the same minister who's responsible for public infrastructure, has been asleep on both of these files, and we find out that the cost has gone from \$221 million to \$551 million—that's what you had in the paper at the second groundbreaking—and now to \$1 billion for this hospital. I say to the Premier, is it not time that this minister who has been asleep at the switch on both these files step aside?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I'm very proud to compare the record of this government to Mr. Miller and his government. In the year 2002, as my colleague reminds me, they closed 28 hospitals. We're rebuilding over 100 hospitals. In the North Bay hospital there was no design, there was no contract, there was no plan and there were no dollars. The question for Mr. Miller, Mr. Tory and his colleagues in the Conservative caucus is, how would they build the hospitals if they're going to cut \$2.5 billion from our health care system? The answer is quite clear. We have a government of the day that is committed to repairing and rebuilding our health care capital. We have a party opposite that have phony plans, phony announcements, phony groundbreakings and have planned a cut for Ontario's health care system. I'll take substance over that phony baloney any day of the week.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. The Provincial Auditor's report on the Bruce nuclear refurbishment deal reveals the dirty little secret of your planned \$40-billion nuclear mega scheme. When it comes to nuclear power, hard-working hydro consumers will end up paying for cost overruns either after the fact or through higher rates built into the initial agreement. At the Bruce nuclear station, it comes to a 44% increase in hydro rates over the going rate.

Premier, what are you going to tell Ontario hydro consumers when they're forced to shell out an extra \$16 billion or \$17 billion in cost overruns on your planned \$40-billion nuclear mega scheme?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): As is typical of the member opposite, there is absolutely no

factual accuracy in anything he just said. He has twisted numbers; he has interpreted numbers inaccurately and ineffectively.

The member opposite says there's no need to redevelop power in Ontario. We say there is. There is a need to redevelop clean, renewable power. We're doing that; he voted against that. He attributes comments to the auditor that the auditor did not make. He's applying his own interpretation. In fact, if you read the auditor's report very carefully, the auditor says specifically that you can't aggregate those numbers, that you would then in fact be distorting the accuracy of the report. But that is common.

The reason this government asked the auditor to do that report and made it public two hours after we got it was because we had to make a good deal. We made a good deal. The people of Ontario are protected by this government, and they're not well-served by distortion and inaccuracy in the member opposite's comments.

Mr. Hampton: The Provincial Auditor is very clear: The McGuinty government is going to pay 7.1 cents a kilowatt hour for electricity that should only cost 4.9 cents a kilowatt hour at the Bruce nuclear station.

Tom Adams from Energy Probe is even more clear. He says that the McGuinty government tried to hide these figures by all sorts of manoeuvres. But however you cut it, that's a 44% increase over the going hydro rate.

My question to the Premier is this: How do you explain to hard-working Ontarians who are paying the hydro bill that the first phase of your \$40-billion nuclear mega scheme means that they're going to have to hand over an extra \$1 billion over what you told them initially?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The simple answer is that the numbers the leader of the third party just quoted are false and inaccurate—deliberately distorted, in my view. You cannot interpret the Auditor General's report in that line.

It's interesting to see the leader of the third party sharing common cause with Mr. Adams, who is a coal advocate. Mr. Adams routinely supports the expansion of coal power. Mr. Adams is also the individual who said that Mr. Parkinson was unfairly treated. I suppose he agrees with him on that. Finally, Mr. Adams also supports private power, fully deregulated. It's good to see where you really stand.

I'd also remind the leader of the third party that since we signed the deal, we're actually paying 6.1 cents, not 6.3 cents. It's a good deal for Ontario. This government will keep the lights on.

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. Order. I think this would be a good time. I'm going to remind members of a statement I made to this Legislature on December 4 of last year. I think it's worth reiterating.

"I am disturbed by the increasing use of intemperate language. There's frequently a stunning lack of regard for the traditional hallmarks of parliamentary discourse and,

specifically, respect for the Chair and the integrity of all members. To engage in such behaviour is to be destructive not just to the member or members targeted but to all of us and to this institution."

I think we're going down that path rather rapidly in the last few weeks, and I would ask all members to take regard of our traditions and of our practices here in this place.

1510

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): My question will be asked very respectfully to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As the minister knows, agriculture in the Niagara Falls riding, which is my riding, is the second-largest industry, capable of yielding the highest return per acre of anywhere in Canada. We have flourishing greenhouse, cut flower, tender fruit and, of course, grape and wine industries.

I was particularly delighted to see our government make a major investment in re-energizing the Vineland Research Station, which after many years of neglect was dying on the vine, so to speak. I was also pleased to see that Niagara This Week, in its editorial, wrote a lengthy report stating, "Vineland Centre Rebirth Overdue," and congratulating the governments for the investment.

My question to the minister is, can you tell the House how this investment will help the farmers and growers of my community?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I am very happy to receive the question from the member, who is a tireless advocate not just for the Vineland Research Station but certainly for the agricultural interests in his riding.

Vineland, by the way, has celebrated its 100th anniversary. I was there with a number of members from this Legislature in August to celebrate that, and it was at that time that I think everyone who had been focusing on that special event realized that Vineland was indeed a tired facility and needed some special consideration. So I set up the Vineland advisory panel to bring me recommendations on what would be necessary to make it a world-class, state-of-the-art facility. They brought me some excellent recommendations, and I'm very happy that last week I was able, in conjunction with my federal colleague, to announce an investment of \$12.5 million from the province of Ontario and \$15.5 million from the federal government. This money is going to contribute to the revitalization of Vineland that will make it a model for research—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Craiton: Minister, I'm glad that our government is building partnerships and supporting research that will improve the agri-food industry and the quality of life for rural Ontarians.

As you know, Minister, Brock University, Niagara College and the University of Guelph all play a role in

agricultural development of our wine industry. Can you tell us how Ontario's \$12.5 million will foster research and innovation for the Niagara grape and wine industry, and what roles will continue to be played by these educational centres of excellence in our community?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to have the opportunity to identify for the folks in Ontario who perhaps don't live in Vineland that our government is seized of the research and innovation agenda because of the leadership of our Premier. We have recognized that by investing in research and innovation, particularly in the agriculture sector, we are going to enable the industry for generations to come and make it more sustainable. We recognize that when the government makes investments, that enables the facility to leverage dollars from other levels of government and from the private sector. That has in fact happened at Vineland, as Flowers Canada and the Niagara fruit and vegetable growers' association have also now contributed to the research station. Donald Ziraldo, a private individual, has made a commitment.

After all of this, what we will have in Ontario will be a model for research facilities everywhere in the province and the country. We will have increased the capacity to serve the horticulture—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is for the Premier. We're joined today by yet another victim of the lottery scandal allowed to fester under your watch. In the west gallery, interested in your response to this question, is my constituent Mr. David Menzies from Richmond Hill.

On the very day that the Ombudsman released his scathing report on the scandalous goings-on of the OLG, Mr. Menzies spoke with Mr. Gough, the chair of the OLG, told him about his outstanding lottery ticket issues and received a commitment that he would immediately hear from the OLG's security department. That was now more than two weeks ago: not a phone call, not a letter, and Mr. Gough is refusing to take Mr. Menzies's calls.

What has changed at the OLG? Can you tell Mr. Menzies what he needs to do to get the attention of the OLG to look into his lottery scandal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Let me say that obviously, as a result of raising this matter here today, this has elevated it automatically as a priority, I'm sure, for the OLG. If there's anything at all that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal might do to draw this to the attention of OLG, I'm sure he is prepared to do that.

I do know that there have been more than 700 complaints brought to the fore at Ontario Lottery and Gaming. I believe that 500 of those have now been separately investigated, so I know that OLG is working as quickly as it can. We will ensure that this particular

matter, on behalf of this particular gentleman, is fully brought to the attention of OLG.

Mr. Klees: Mr. Premier, this is Mr. Menzies's second experience with the OLG.

As a winner of a perfect Pro-Picks sports lottery, Mr. Menzies had to threaten litigation with the OLG to be paid out on his jackpot, but only on the condition that he sign a non-disclosure agreement.

Here's my question to you: Why would a legitimate winner of a lottery be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement by a crown corporation to receive winnings that are rightfully his? If there's nothing to hide, why this kind of action?

Can I have your undertaking, on behalf of Mr. Menzies, first of all that that question would be answered—why the necessity for a non-disclosure agreement?—and second, your undertaking that Mr. Menzies will in fact have his rightful day with the OLG to look into his circumstances?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I can't speak to any specifics, but what I can do and what I undertake to do on behalf of the honourable member opposite and Mr. Menzies is to ensure that this is brought to the attention of the OLG, complete with a request that they do everything within their power to ensure that this gentleman is treated fairly.

I can say to Ontarians broadly that a number of changes have been put in place to ensure that there are more protections for the many, many Ontarians who participate in lottery games on a daily basis. In fact, as you well know, many, many recommendations have been brought to the fore now from both the Ombudsman and KPMG, who turned other matters over to the police. We will do whatever we have to do in order to ensure that people like Mr. Menzies and others throughout the province can have confidence in their gaming system.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Minister, let me share an excerpt from the government agencies committee report on the OLG. On November 29, 2006, Mr. Tascona, Ms. Scott and myself voted to reopen hearings. We were voted down by government members Mr. Gravelle, Mr. Milloy, Mr. Parsons, Ms. Smith and Mr. Wilkinson. I then suggested that a front page or a lengthy paragraph insert be included explaining that this was a snapshot report based on hearings held before the recent allegations came to light. That too was voted down.

Why did members of your government turn down this opportunity way back then to investigate the OLGC?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I in fact do have a copy of some of the Hansard from November 22, where the member opposite says, "I would support that, and Mr. Johnston's"—the researcher's—"comments. We could be involved in an endless rewrite here, but I think we need to reflect where we were. We're making changes, but not substantive change at this

point." That's what the member for Parkdale-High Park said on November 22 at the standing committee on government agencies, an all-party committee at the Legislature in fact chaired by Mrs. Munro.

1520

The Premier earlier had indicated that the standing committee on government agencies had not met for eight years or called a government agency in eight years. That practice changed with this government because we believe in openness and transparency and giving members of this Legislative Assembly an opportunity to interview, to make recommendations. In fact, I can share with members that I have received not only the recommendations, but the members of the committee are receiving the responses, and the implementation is ongoing.

Ms. DiNovo: The letter of dissent is right in the report, and I invite the minister to actually read it. The government agencies committee is the place where the investigation of the OLGC could have happened, should have happened and didn't happen, and it didn't happen because this government shut it down way back in November. I would like to ask you again and maybe get an answer this time: Why did you shut it down?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, the government agencies committee did take a look, I believe, at Hydro One, LCBO and OLG and made several excellent recommendations which are currently being implemented. And I would say that the response is coming back to the committee on the status report of those recommendations.

But it goes even further than that. An independent officer of this Legislature, the Ombudsman, had a chance to look into the particular matters that were alleged in the CBC's *The Fifth Estate* broadcast and issued I thought a very fair and balanced report complete with 23 recommendations. Taken with KPMG's 40, there were 60 recommendations in total, 17 of which have already been implemented, 25 will be complete by the end of June and the remaining 18 are ongoing. I look forward, with the board, to seeing the rest of those being implemented.

In fact, the Ombudsman does comment. He says, "I commend the minister and the government for their openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate"—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): My question is for the Minister of Education. On this side of the House we understand that to reach every student, we need to continue to improve opportunities for our First Nation, Metis and Inuit students. In fact Janet Wilkinson, director of education for the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board, recently said with respect to our support, "I am so proud of what this government has done by acknowledging for the first time that education for aboriginal students has to be recognized. There is recognition for the first time in the funding model for aboriginal

students, and the projects being supported will generate new approaches to ensuring aboriginal students have equal opportunity.”

I was pleased to take part in an announcement with Minister Ramsay this past week in Sault Ste. Marie outlining our new funding as part of our government's ongoing commitment to work with all aboriginal organizations and communities to build a better future for First Nation, Metis and Inuit children and youth. Minister, can you elaborate on the specific enhancements for aboriginal students in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): First of all, thank you for the question, to the member for Sault Ste. Marie. I want to acknowledge the work that he did when he was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. He worked to lay the framework for aboriginal education.

This is a very important change to the funding formula. It's very interesting that the leader of the third party made reference to the Keewatin-Patricia board, because in fact it is Janet Wilkinson, who is the director of the Keewatin-Patricia board, who has been advocating for this kind of change. Mordechai Rozanski said we needed to have a supplement in the funding formula, so we have made this change. What this will do is provide increased funding for native language programs. It will provide increased support for boards to offer any of the 10 native language studies courses that are in the Ontario curriculum and offer additional funding for support programs that assist aboriginal students. The Keewatin-Patricia board alone this year will get \$1.1 million. There will be no cuts to that board's funding this year. They will have increased funding and specific funding for aboriginal students. It's a very important change.

Mr. Oraziatti: I'm sure the First Nation communities were pleased to hear that this grant was one of three additional changes we've made this year alone to the funding formula. We're taking the flawed formula drafted by the previous government and making the necessary improvements to fix it. It reminds me of the MPAC disaster under the past government. We're providing resources for schools and students because we understand the unique challenges of rural and northern boards. In Sault Ste. Marie we have invested almost \$4.5 million in additional education funding alone, bringing our new investment to over \$18 million, boosting per pupil funding by over 30%, an average of \$2,800 per student in my community.

It's great to see the Liberal education funding formula working well in Ontario. Minister, what are the additional changes we've made this year, and how will they benefit students across the province?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: In addition to the new First Nations, Metis and Inuit education supplement, we've made two significant additions to the funding formula. The funding formula has to be changed and has been changed by adding more money. So \$3.5 billion of new money has gone into education since we've been in office. The members opposite want to minimize that, but

that is a significant amount of money that has bought more teachers and more resources.

What we did this year is add a new grant—the program enhancement grant, which is \$35 million—that allows boards to invest in things like outdoor education, music, arts and phys ed programs that allow a little bit of flexibility, which is exactly what boards asked us for. We talked to them. They said, “We have these programs that historically we have offered. We don't have direct funding for them. We need some flexibility.” So the program enhancement grant begins to address that issue.

The third area that we've added into the funding formula this year is the supported schools allocation. What this grant does is recognize the isolated schools in our communities. This is additional funding that will support 177 schools, and these are schools—both elementary and secondary—that are far away from other schools in their board. What this money does is guarantee that there will be a minimum number of teachers in both elementary and secondary—7.5 teachers in elementary and 14 teachers in secondary—so that programs can be delivered to their students.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Deputy Premier, I suppose. I understand the Premier had to leave.

Over the last several weeks we've seen a number of people from the lottery corporation as actual and perceived fallout as a result of the lottery scandal. The list includes former CEO Duncan Brown; former vice-president for security, Michael Sharland; and former chief marketing officer, Alan Berdowski. Will you provide the House with a complete list of people who have been let go or have opted to leave the OLG as a result of this scandal on your watch?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I can speak to the individuals involved. Mr. Brown and the board reached a mutual agreement that separation was appropriate. I can tell you that Mr. Sharland is currently on temporary leave with the corporation.

I would highlight to the member opposite that the Ombudsman has indicated exceptional and exemplary support and co-operation with his investigation. I would expect as well that with the OPP—they've referred the matter on to the Toronto police force to conduct the appropriate review—that the appropriate and necessary co-operation will be there. Of course, the Ombudsman does indicate, on page 68 of his report, “I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change.”

Along with the board, I want this member and all members to know that we will ensure that the Ombudsman's recommendations—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Yakubuski: It seems this government is always in a rush to sign a deal with somebody when it's the taxpayers' money.

This list is important because these are the people who will be able to provide the full picture of what actually went on between the OLG and the Premier's office and the minister's office during this scandal cover-up.

We know that the practice of the OLG, when they sign agreements with people like the late Bob Edmonds, is to have them sign a gag order. Will the Premier please advise the House as to whether or not those who have left the OLG in the wake of the lottery scandal have been asked to sign gag orders, and will those gag orders be enforced if these individuals are called in to participate in an investigation into what went on in this cover-up scandal?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The Ombudsman was very clear when he said in his media conference back a couple of weeks ago, on March 26, "I conclude that they"—the OLG—"put profits ahead of public service. I think there was a point, a crossroads, in 2002." Of course, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke might not want to ask his colleague who sits right in front of him, just to the left, what role they did or did not have. I note that none of the members opposite want to in fact share what they did or what they didn't do. But the Ombudsman goes further. He says, "At that point, the OLG could have gone two ways. It could have said, 'We'll apply the law and take the measures to act diligently.' But a month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the Superior Court didn't apply. Then it became a slippery slope."

These were the actions and this was the corporate culture in 2002. Unfortunately, folks at the time turned a blind eye or swept this under the carpet. This government—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

1530

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): In the absence of the Premier, I'll direct my question to the Deputy Premier. Concern is deepening over your government's lack of action in the avalanche of job losses in communities like Hamilton and surrounding areas. Thousands of steel and manufacturing sector workers have been thrown out of work, including another couple of hundred announced on the weekend by Stelco, which is mothballing its hot strip mill. Thursday's sudden closure of GenFast Manufacturing in Brantford adds 210 more people to the McGuinty government job loss column.

My question is very simple: Where is your plan for saving good-paying manufacturing jobs in communities like Hamilton?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): This is a very important question for the people in many regions of Ontario where there is more challenge today than before, especially in the manufacturing sector. We know this is a world-wide phenomenon. Our government is unique in that in these recent years there has not been a government providing this level of support to the manufacturing sector. I'd look forward to offering this list to this member, who has the nerve to ask the question, who has voted against every budget that our government has tabled—every budget, including our OAIS plan, our AMIS program, all of these incentives for the manufacturing sector to invest. This is the same member who voted against every single measure. You've got a nerve standing up in the House and suggesting what you're suggesting in your question. You come on over here; I've got a list to show you.

Ms. Horwath: You know, it's really the unique support that this government is not showing that gives me the nerve to ask these hard questions that the minister refuses to answer. I don't think her answer was very good at all.

GenFast was company of the year in 2000. So much for your unique support that kept it here. It was bought by a carpetbagging Michigan company called MNP Corp., which then ran it into the ground under your watch and let it slide into receivership in order to shift production to the USA.

Your complacency in the face of so many manufacturing jobs being lost in communities like Hamilton and Brantford is alarming, to say the least. You refuse to pass the NDP's job protection act, which was designed to prevent exactly that kind of inexcusable corporate behaviour here in the province of Ontario, so what are you going to do, Minister? Where is your plan?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I really do appreciate the opportunity, but let me say one thing: You are one person I would not have on my sales team marketing Ontario as a place to invest. What we are telling the world right now and what we are doing—we're going to the world to invest in Ontario, because we do have the best skilled trades, the most educated workforce, including in this very member's own hometown. I think you should be proud of the workers of Hamilton and be proud of the message that we can send around the world that Hamilton is the place to invest because we can give those companies the opportunity to make a good business there, good for the communities. But this, I must say, is the same member who voted against every single measure that put half a billion dollars in the auto strategy, half a billion dollars in the advanced manufacturing strategy. What did this member do? She voted against those—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Sit down. New question.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): My question is to the Minister of Government Services and it concerns our government's efforts to combat government waste. As members are aware, every year the Auditor General issues a report containing observations and advice on how the government should be managing its resources.

When it came to the previous government, one area of particular concern was the use of private consultants. I'd like to quote from page 400 of the 2004 Auditor General's report:

"Over the five-year period from 1998 to 2002, there was a substantial increase in annual consulting services expenditures at Ontario ministries, from \$271 million in 1998 to \$662 million in 2002.... [C]onsulting services were not acquired and managed with due regard for value for money."

"There was a heavy dependence on the use of consultants. Hundreds of consultants were engaged at per diem rates that were on average two to three times higher than the salaries of ministry employees performing similar duties."

I'd like to ask the minister what measures our government—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Minister?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Well, I anticipate the question. I think it was, what measures have we taken?

Let me just say that we have looked very carefully at the use of consultants, and the auditor was right. What we found was that many consultants were used essentially rather than civil servants, at two and three times the cost. So we examined quite a number of positions. We found that there were probably about 940 people who were consultants who should have been public servants, at considerable cost. We repatriated those jobs, and we saved taxpayers \$38 million in doing that. We reduced consulting expenditures by roughly 33%.

There will continue to be the need for consultants, but what we did there, rather than the per diems, we've moved to fixed contracts. So we have a fixed contract. We are insisting that the government of Ontario and the people of Ontario get the best possible price from the consultant. That's written into our requests for proposals. We're putting stricter time limits on consultants.

So we've moved very aggressively in this area. I might add for the public's information that in our budget there are nine full pages that are worth reading, from page 106 on, on other measures we've taken to make sure that we are saving the taxpayers dollars while giving them the best possible public service.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to read a petition from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I'm pleased to sign that in support of this petition on behalf of my constituents.

1540

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This is a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly to regulate zoos to protect animals and communities:

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I have signed this and send it to the table by way of page Jordan.

GRAVESITES OF FORMER PREMIERS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a petition signed by a number of members from the Cornwall Township Historical Society, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premiers of Ontario have made enormous contributions over the years in shaping the Ontario of today; and

"Whereas, as a result, the final resting places of the 18 deceased Premiers are among the most historically significant sites in the province, but have yet to be officially recognized; and

"Whereas, were these gravesites to be properly maintained and marked with an historical plaque and a flag of Ontario, these locations would be a source of pride to the communities where these former Premiers lie buried, and provide potential points of interest for visitors;

"Now therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 25, an act that will preserve the gravesites of the former Premiers of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I affix my signature and send it with Craig.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition signed by thousands of people in Parry Sound-Muskoka regarding lab services at Muskoka Algonquin hospital, and they read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) has indicated its support for moving significant parts of its laboratory operations to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie; and

"Whereas MAHC has also indicated that it intends to cease doing community-based lab work if it does not receive \$150,000 more in funding from the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the impact of such decisions will negatively affect timely health care delivery to residents of Muskoka, while increasing the overall cost to taxpayers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain hospital and community-based lab services at the existing facilities in Bracebridge and Huntsville, including restoration of lab services that have

recently been contracted out to hospitals in Sudbury and Barrie."

I support this petition.

SHORELINE RIGHT OF PASSAGE

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I am pleased to introduce a petition that has been signed by many students from Fort Erie and a number of residents from Fort Erie as well. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it simply reads as follows:

"Access for All Great Lakes Right of Passage

"We, the undersigned, support the MPP from Niagara's right-of-passage bill which was just introduced today."

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's always a pleasure to stand and to support my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls, with this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program."

It's my pleasure to sign this petition and to ask page Cody to carry it for me.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

"Whereas Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

"Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools."

I'm pleased to sign my signature to support this petition.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): I'm pleased to rise today on a very important issue in my constituency. We're trying to get a new secondary school from the public board in Longfields and Davidson Heights.

"Whereas Longfields and Davidson Heights in south Nepean are some of the fastest-growing communities in Ottawa and Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board has voted to authorize the final design phases for a grade 7 to 12 school to serve the Longfields and Davidson Heights communities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has lifted a three-year moratorium on school closings in order to make way for new educational facilities;

"We, residents of Nepean–Carleton, petition the Parliament of Ontario to ensure that the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board continues with plans to build a new grade 7 to 12 school no later than autumn of 2008 to serve" the constituents of "the Longfields and Davidson Heights communities."

I present it to page Katrina.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I'm the only guy standing.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance" plan.

I agree with the petition and I'll sign it.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have more petitions to do with community lab services at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the residents of the communities served by Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare ... wish to maintain current community lab services; and

"Whereas maintaining community lab services promotes physician retention and benefits family health teams; and

"Whereas the funding for community lab services is currently a strain on the operating budget of" Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare; and

"Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas the operating budget for MAHC needs to reflect the growing demand for services in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health increase the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to permit continued operation of community" laboratory services.

I support this petition.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): This petition is on behalf of my colleague from Niagara Falls. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

"Whereas Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

"Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools."

I agree with the petition. I put my signature on it as well.

1550

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): I'm so excited to read this petition into the Legislature, particularly

since you're in the chair right now and you were able to visit this wonderful location I'm about to speak to.

"We Call on the Government of Ontario to Ensure Dickinson Square Remains a Public Place

"Whereas the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, a provincial regulatory agency, is scheduled to move out of Dickinson Square, Manotick, in the summer of 2007; and

"Whereas the designated buildings of Dickinson Square are steeped in Canadian and Ontario history and are the city of Ottawa's only and one of the few remaining working industrial heritage sites in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas these five buildings of Dickinson Square are now at risk to potential non-heritage use development; and

"Whereas recent public consultation has resulted in overwhelming support to retain all five buildings in public ownership and management; and

"Whereas community agencies have formed a non-profit organization, Dickinson Square Management, to build upon the successful management of Watson's Mill and create a vibrant, public-owned arts and heritage cultural space within the square;

"That we, the residents of Manotick and surrounding areas in the city of Ottawa, call upon the government of Ontario to take a leadership role in working with the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority and the city of Ottawa in order to ensure the historic site of Dickinson Square remain under the auspices of public ownership and management."

I fully support this petition and present it to page Alistair.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today from the good citizens from the Niagara Peninsula who are very concerned about physical activity in our secondary schools.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

"Whereas Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

"Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools" in Ontario.

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Alyssa.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 4, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 187, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): For those who may be tuning in on the parliamentary channel, members are allotted 20 minutes during this debate. I could certainly spend much more time than 20 minutes critiquing the latest Liberal budget, but I am going to go quickly over a number of the highlights, or lowlights, as some may describe them, and then talk about some specifics related to my riding of Leeds–Grenville.

Some of the areas that we've discussed over the past couple of weeks that were not dealt with, in our view, in an adequate manner included the fact that Ontario has lost 120,000 high-paying manufacturing jobs over just the last two years. I suspect that number is much higher than that now, because we're seeing on an almost weekly basis new announcements about manufacturing job losses.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Another 5,000 last month.

Mr. Runciman: Another 5,000 last month, my colleague indicates. We certainly heard one of the NDP members today talking about significant job losses at Stelco in Hamilton being announced last week. That's a concern, and I will get into that in a little more detail later.

Another point: Disposable incomes in Ontario are growing at the slowest rate in the country. Ontario was dead last in economic growth among Canadian provinces in 2006, trailing the next-slowest-growing province, Prince Edward Island, by a substantial 0.6%. Ontario used to be the economic engine of this country, and now it appears under the McGuinty Liberal government that we've become the caboose. In the census which was just recently made public, Ontario reported a net loss of

30,000 people, and that's just in the last year alone. That's a record, with a record loss of almost 15,000 people in the third quarter moving out of this province because of the lack of job prospects and the significant erosion, the hollowing out, of the manufacturing sector in this province.

A couple of quick points: a \$22.4-billion increase in annual spending by this Liberal government since taking office. That translates into an understandable number for most Ontarians: a \$4,504 increase per year for every Ontario household. That's a staggering almost \$750,000 increase in spending for every hour that this government has been in office. Just think of that: \$750,000 for every hour they have been in office. It took 136 years, from Confederation until 2003, for the Ontario government's expenditures to reach \$68 billion, but Mr. McGuinty and his friends have single-handedly managed to increase spending to \$91 billion in the coming fiscal year. We know that program spending is increasing a little over 8% a year under the Liberal government. Economic growth has averaged 4%. So they've increased spending during their time in office by double what the average economic growth has been in the province.

A point which is of interest to us—not necessarily one that's going to grab the interest of the public, but I'll put it on the record anyway: From 2003-04 until the last fiscal year, Mr. McGuinty and his colleagues have spent close to \$22 billion more than they promised during the campaign, and they've taken in \$10 billion more than they expected to take in.

An estimated 1.2 million, or 10% of Ontarians, are without a family doctor. Despite all of this rapid-fire spending, that hasn't changed. Ontarians living in rural Ontario are particularly underserved. In 2005, the province suffered a net loss of 14 doctors to other jurisdictions. Contrast that with British Columbia, where they had a net gain of 113 doctors in the same time period.

Homeowners remain unprotected from property tax assessments. We've seen these promises in 2008 and this initiative under the budget, but in fact, like so many of the promises they're now making, which Ontarians are going to have a difficult time believing, they are all being postponed until after the election.

More than 8,300 children are on the waiting list for mental health services, and approximately 2,300 of those kids have been on that waiting list for more than a year.

More than \$6,000 in additional long-term-care funding was promised in the last campaign, as well as an additional 20 minutes of care, but those promises are not being met.

Numerous school boards have had to slash budgets and raid other spending envelopes, such as special education, to balance their books. Public education has suffered. Split grades are now common, and there are more portables. I saw that when I visited North Grenville. It's unbelievable, the growth of portables over the life of this government. This is probably because of their botched class size cap promise. We know as well that Ontario schools are less safe, and the principals' council

recently reported that safety is being jeopardized because of this government's education failures.

1600

Air quality is worse. In 2005 there was a record 15 smog advisories covering 53 days. The previous record was 10 smog advisories covering 27 days. In 2005, for the first time in our history, we had a smog alert during the winter.

There's a shortage of justices of the peace, and this is costing most municipalities millions of dollars in uncollected fines as court dates are cancelled and various serious Provincial Offences Act charges are dropped due to lack of available trial times.

The Ministry of Agriculture: To reduce the amount of money for safety net programs, we've reduced their budget again this year by \$100 million.

Tourism: Again, when we see the loss of manufacturing jobs, the fact that they're cutting the tourism budget just boggles the mind. If there's one thing we want to do to counter some of these job losses, it's to attract more visitors to our province. Mr. Speaker, you're very familiar with this issue. Last year we had the most significant drop in US visitors since we started recording that number. How do they address that? They're spending close to \$5 million on wasted advertising. No one knows what these ads are all about—full-page colour ads no one can comprehend. Instead of addressing the need to attract more visitors from south of our border—and that has to be the most significant market that we should be pursuing—they're not doing it. What they're doing is using this money, I guess, to try to enhance their electoral prospects, because there's certainly nothing there that is going to attract the expenditure of tourism dollars.

In my own riding, we have a number of community health centres. The very successful ones—I sat down recently with Portland Country Roads Community Health Center in the Merrickville district. They're having a great deal of problems in attracting talent, especially nurse practitioners. This is a challenge for them that the government has to take a look at because these are significantly important operations in rural communities, and certainly in my riding they are being impacted by the lack of funding they need to attract these professionals into these areas.

We all know about the problems with COMRIF. I'll use a couple of examples: North Grenville. I was talking to the mayor there, Bill Gooch, and Doug Struthers of Merrickville Wolford, where they've been turned down on three occasions. North Grenville is an example. This is a community that looked after itself in the past, kept their infrastructure in good shape and now they are being penalized through the criteria with COMRIF. This is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Ontario and they're going to be restricted in terms of their ability to meet those pressures because of a lack of support and assistance. Merrickville Wolford, with their water treatment, their sewage treatment plant, their effluent, is meeting the standards but they've been told that this plant could collapse at any moment. What would that mean to

that community and to the Rideau system that could be impacted? Yet again they've been rejected, and we don't get adequate justification for these rejections.

I want to talk a bit about the Brockville Psychiatric Hospital. We had the federal government now encouraged to take a look at one of the soon-to-be-vacant facilities there for perhaps the housing of federal inmates with mental illness. Hopefully, if the federal government has an interest, this will require a commitment from the provincial government through the Ontario Realty Corp. to spend monies to upgrade a building on that site. If you take a look at the secure treatment facility that's operating there now for provincial inmates with mental health challenges, it's been an enormous success. We have the expertise in place there. This would be an enormous economic boost to the area, to the region. Hopefully the provincial government will not once again be the impediment for this going ahead. We know the McGuinty government, despite Mr. McGuinty's promises before the election—on this site, we had three phases: the secure treatment unit and phases 2 and 3, which would have meant well over 300 good jobs to that region. Mr. McGuinty was in the area prior to the election, as the opposition leader—and we have this in writing; it appeared in the Brockville Recorder and Times—and he made a commitment in black and white, "Yes, I'm committed; our party is committed to completing phases 2 and 3 of that project."

What happened after the election? One of the first things they did was cancel phases 2 and 3.

Mr. Hudak: There's a surprise.

Mr. Runciman: Yes, not much of a surprise, but certainly a disappointment to those people who believed that promise that the then leader of the opposition, now the Premier, made.

We may have an opportunity to grow jobs on this site through the federal government, but at the end of the day, this will still depend on the Ontario Realty Corp. I have to say that I'm not terribly optimistic. I sent the minister responsible for ORC, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal—

Mr. Hudak: What did he do?

Mr. Runciman: We toured those buildings, and the grounds of the psych hospital are deteriorating, roofs leaking, heaters shut off even though portable heaters were sitting there. We were told they were just abandoning those buildings. We're talking about heritage properties. I sent the minister over a list of photos that we took of the damage in those buildings. I met with his staff. Nothing happening. We phoned to ask ORC if they were going to do anything. Nothing. There were no RFPs—nothing. So we sent those pictures to the local media. We sent them to the local heritage preservation group. Then all of a sudden there was a front-page story about the damage to these buildings and all of a sudden Minister Caplan says, "Oh, we have an RFP to repair those." We have an RFP responding to a front-page story in the Brockville paper, but of course, everything before that was no, no, no, deny, deny, deny. That's a message

we hear from that particular minister on regular occasions.

I'm hoping that in the future we don't have to embarrass the government by going to the media. We tried to work in a very co-operative way. That was our first effort. We tried to work with the minister, with the minister's offices. We provided him with pictures. And then he pulled that one on us. So in any event, we now believe they're going to be protected.

I talked about 120,000 manufacturing jobs. We've seen Domtar in Cornwall close—and I want to talk about eastern Ontario very specifically—Collins and Aikman in Gananoque, Mahle in Gananoque, Nestlé in Chesterville, Siegwerk in Prescott. This is just a few; most recently, the Hershey announcement in Smiths Falls, 500 jobs in a community of 900 people.

The eastern Ontario secretariat—we've had a couple of very positive things happen. We've suggested to this government in a co-operative way an eastern Ontario secretariat, an eastern Ontario prosperity fund. There's nothing in the budget to deal with those. The feds, through FedNor, put about \$28 million into eastern Ontario in the last couple of years. That's leveraged another \$66 million in investments. We're getting nothing from these folks. In fact, they've cut the tourism budget, they've cut the agricultural budget, and I said they have effectively abandoned eastern Ontario or small town, small city, rural eastern Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Runciman: The member from Cornwall does nothing but sit in here and interject. Why isn't he doing something for eastern Ontario in a meaningful way instead of criticizing people who are fighting for that region of the province, like our colleagues are? Why hasn't he brought in an eastern Ontario secretariat? Why doesn't he stand up and fight for that? Why doesn't he talk about an eastern Ontario prosperity fund instead of sitting in here trying to upset my speech when I'm fighting for eastern Ontario and he's not doing the job for those people?

I talked about abandoning—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh to please come to order and allow the member for Leeds-Grenville to make his points. I'll look after you at the end of your speech.

Mr. Runciman: One of the newspapers in my riding talked about this and said, "While we don't necessarily agree with abandoning"—they thought that might be too strong a word. But I think "neglect" is certainly a word that stands up to scrutiny.

I only have four minutes or so left, and I want to talk about Hershey and the impact of that closure in conjunction with the closure of Rideau Regional, which the Liberal government has fast-tracked to close. That's going to have another significant impact. One of the things that I think this government could play a role in, if they really want to do something about helping a small community and that part of eastern Ontario, is talk to the

municipality and some of the employees with respect to the possibility of forming a company, and perhaps with government assistance and working with Hershey, see if there's a possibility of fulfilling contracts for specific product lines for Hershey and perhaps other chocolate makers like Cadbury and Nestlé.

1610

I raise this possibility because I've seen it in my own riding with Black and Decker: Former employees of Black and Decker were able to work out a deal with Black and Decker where they're now providing the Workmate product out of the Brockville plant. They rent space from Black and Decker, and they also bid on other Black and Decker product lines. These are former employees. The equipment was there, they worked out a deal to purchase the equipment and enter into contracts and I think there's a new contract coming up in a short while for the continuation of the Workmate product line.

Phillips Cables, which closed down in my community: A number of the employees were able to locate angel investors and purchase equipment from the Phillips cable company. They now have a firm called Northern Cables, which has taken part of the niche market from the Phillips company and is working with Phillips in a co-operative way. That's the sort of thing I think we should be exploring, because this facility is so important not just to Smiths Falls and the surrounding area, but also to eastern Ontario.

A lot of people don't realize that the Hershey plant has about 400,000 to 500,000 visitors—tourists—who come to that Hershey plant every year on an annual basis. It's a very significant tourist draw, so we should be looking at that. I believe that if we can maintain a chocolate-making operation—now, there's speculation in the paper that they're going to open a chocolate store in Smiths Falls. That's not going to draw anybody other than anybody with a sweet tooth; but people really want to go, they bring school bus tours, all sorts of folks—bus tours—into that site to watch the chocolate-making operation. If we work with Hershey—this is something that should be actively explored. There is, I think, a real role for the provincial government to play here in terms of assisting, not just through economic development but through the tourism ministry as well.

Obviously, I believe there should be a fund similar to what Mr. Sterling has talked about, similar to what the federal government is doing, and we will probably be able to quite successfully tap into that federal fund to assist in this initiative. It's something that should be explored. I am very strong on pursuing this. I'll be talking to the Minister of Economic Development; I'll be talking to the mayor; I've had a brief chat with some of the representatives of the employee groups about this. I haven't fleshed this out, but rather than simply saying, "This is a fait accompli; we throw up our hands"—and I saw a story in the Brockville paper dated April 7: "Hershey Closure Confirmed." I think folks have pretty well accepted that this is a done deal. I don't think we should accept this. We should explore other oppor-

tunities. If the provincial government is really committed to helping out this part of the province, this is an opportunity that they should not miss out on.

I want to talk to the Minister of Economic Development. Perhaps she can drive this. Certainly, I think the mayor, Dennis Staples, who is an outstanding community leader, will be interested in pursuing this and exploring it. I suspect most of the employees at Hershey, as well, would be prepared to get engaged and get involved. And I see no reason why Hershey itself would not be interested in exploring the possibilities that might be inherent in this kind of possibility. They're looking for the best product at the best price, and if we can do that through this facility with well-trained employees and excellent equipment already in place, we should be able to accomplish this. That was the primary message.

I want to close off. You're being generous, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate that. I'm just saying I think more attention has to be paid to my region of the province. Many communities are suffering and I call on the government to take up the slack here, to get off the bench and into the game.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the comments made by the member for Leeds–Grenville, when he talks about communities that are suffering, I know that if he had more time he would talk about some of those communities in northern Ontario that are being wiped out right now as we speak because of this government's high hydro rates, which are killing jobs right across northern Ontario.

I just want to put onto the record some of those communities and some of the job losses, because we have seen over 4,000 job losses in the forestry sector in northern Ontario under the McGuinty Liberal government, communities like Chapleau, 100 jobs; Smooth Rock Falls, 400 jobs—the entire mill shut down; Dryden, 520 jobs between the paper mill and the sawmill; Kenora, 400 jobs gone; Thunder Bay, 1,200 jobs gone between a number of plants in that community—they are taking a beating; Longlac, 300 jobs; Ignace, 75 jobs; Opasatika, 100 jobs; Timmins, 150; the entire woodlands operation at the Nairn Centre sawmill, then the Nairn Centre sawmill itself, which was another 150 jobs; the Espanola pulp and paper mill, 150 jobs; the boxboard mill in Sturgeon Falls; now we have St. Marys in Sault Ste. Marie with several hundred jobs on the verge of collapse, and the list goes on and on.

In this most recent budget, did the government do anything about the job-killing high hydro rates that are forcing the closures of these mills, sawmills and pulp and paper mills in northern Ontario? No, the government did not. So we have an incredible problem in northern Ontario. Jobs continue to be lost in northern Ontario while this government sits on its hands and does nothing.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I'm delighted to have a couple of minutes this

afternoon to respond to the member from Leeds–Grenville, the neighbouring riding.

Certainly in my riding there's more to coming to a riding, as he did just a couple of weeks ago, and standing out in front of an industry—Domtar—with signs that were purchased probably at a local store, that can be purchased anywhere, with “Closed” or “Sorry, we're closed.” There's more than that, and that's what I've been doing in the riding. It's more than that. It's encouraging businesses in my riding to expand, as Merrimac has in Cornwall. They've moved up to Iroquois to open a facility there. There's more than that. There's more to the efforts that I've made in my riding to expand tourism opportunities.

Certainly the member knows what was in the budget on page 87. All he has to do is open the budget book to page 87: A \$2-million annual increase to the St. Lawrence Parks Commission for the deficits in road construction, deficits in Upper Canada Village, Fort Henry and all those other operations where infrastructure was let go for many years. We've tackled that. We're going to put money into that and we're going to make sure that we have the shine back in the jewels on the crown of the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, and I'm proud of that. I'm proud that I tackled that issue and brought it forward to the ministry and that they've been so accommodating to that.

Remember, it was his government that in 1995-96 shut down the Eastern Ontario Development Corp. This was a corporation that provided those loans and the opportunity for expansion and for businesses to get off the ground.

The member can stand there and slam me for, he says, inaction, but all he has to do is come down to the riding and see what I've done. I can tell you that St. Lawrence Parks Commission staff are absolutely pleased and thrilled with what we've done as a government for that commission.

Mr. Hudak: I'm pleased to rise and support my colleague's comments on the devastation caused to the manufacturing sector in the province of Ontario as part of his presentation on the budget. I know our colleague from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh has entered into the debate as well, talking about the increased funding for the St. Lawrence Parks Commission. We always like to see investments in tourism. No doubt, as my colleague pointed out, the tourism budget is actually lower than it was in 2005-06. There's a lot of one-time funding in this budget as well, as opposed to general marketing initiatives to benefit the province as a whole.

I've heard criticisms as well from tourism operators in my area that the commercials now—a big spend on TV—look more like they're motivated to promote the government and create a feeling of security in the government as opposed to inducing people to travel in the province or to visit from border states. So I'm concerned about the motivation behind the new commercials, from the comments I've heard in my riding.

1620

Getting back to eastern Ontario and the Cornwall situation particularly, I think that if people were to

choose between a handout from the government to the St. Lawrence Parks Commission versus the well-paying manufacturing jobs that Dalton McGuinty has chased out of Ontario—the 1,000-plus at Domtar in Cornwall; Nestlé we've talked about; Hershey's in Smiths Falls—sadly, eastern Ontario has become the poster child for the manufacturing exodus in Ontario, some 5,000—

Mr. Brownell: It has not. Give me a break.

Mr. Hudak: If my colleague from Cornwall disagrees, then I suggest he spend more time in his community.

It's hard to imagine a community that has been harder hit than Cornwall, when you see a place the size of Domtar with its great history and the 1,000-plus jobs—I know my colleague said he'd blame it on Ontario consumers and that they should buy more clothes, although what that's got to do with Domtar, I'm not clear. But I do worry about the loss of manufacturing jobs in this province.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I know that the member for Leeds–Grenville, having been in this place for more than a quarter century now, has seen many budgets come and go from his vantage point on both sides of the House, so it was certainly revealing to be able to get his comments on the budget that we're debating here at this time.

The issue of job losses cuts across the rural-urban divide in my very own riding, which is an urban riding in the west end of Toronto. Over the past three years we've lost several hundred very well paying manufacturing jobs, so I can certainly echo the sentiments of the member when he speaks of job losses. What we're seeing is that these well-paying jobs are being replaced by jobs that aren't so well-paying. They are minimum wage jobs, particularly in the retail sector. In my riding, we lose several hundred well-paying manufacturing jobs at Kodak and they're replaced by a brand new Wal-Mart or perhaps a new fast-food outlet. Clearly, at the end of the day Ontarians lose out.

In our party's dissenting opinion following the pre-budget consultations, we put out a number of proposals, and one of those was to create a jobs protection commissioner for Ontario. That would address this issue, this crisis, in a very meaningful way. I would like to ask the member for Leeds–Grenville—I realize his time will be short—to perhaps offer his take on our proposal to create a jobs protection commissioner for Ontario. Perhaps he could expand and offer his party's views on whether he thinks that would be a viable initiative for the province when it comes to addressing the crisis in job losses across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Leeds–Grenville for his response.

Mr. Runciman: I thank all those members who participated. I have to indicate to you, if you were paying attention, that I did not interrupt the member from Cornwall while he was speaking. He said I was attacking him, but I was not going to even comment until he started

shouting very loudly and trying to interrupt my commentary.

Interjection.

Mr. Runciman: He's doing it again. It's truly unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that we can't have that kind of discussion and debate in this place without someone losing their cool. This is a Liberal—

Laughter.

Mr. Runciman: It's a big joke: 120,000 jobs lost, especially in eastern Ontario. They're laughing at it. I want all the viewers to know that Liberal members are laughing at this concept. They're interrupting us, not standing up and fighting it. But of course we know we have a Torontocentric government. Half the cabinet is from the Toronto area. We had the member from Ottawa, when he said he wasn't running again, indicating one of the reasons is that he's tired of serving for a Toronto-based government. That's what this is.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I did not say that.

Mr. Runciman: Well, something along those lines.

The reality is that we saw what they tried to do with farmers' markets, with church suppers. They have no understanding, no appreciation of what's happening in small-town rural Ontario. And the reality is that we're seeing the hollowing out, an erosion, of these good-paying, solid jobs that have been in many small communities for years and years. Where are our kids, our grandkids, going to go for these kinds of jobs in the future? That's a real challenge and they are not meeting it. They're not even talking about it. In fact, they try to shout down members who want to raise these very legitimate issues and concerns of the people we're here to represent. That's not right, and it's something that we're not going to stand for in the Progressive Conservative Party. John Tory and the PC Party will do something about it when we become the government this coming October.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ferreira: I will try to use my time wisely and I will try not to get stuck in the middle in this burgeoning rivalry between Cornwall and Brockville. We'll let that be settled on October 10, as the case may be.

I want to spend most of my time here this afternoon talking about housing once again. I had a chance last week when we rose to debate an important amendment to the budget. I spent most of my time talking about housing, and I'm going to do that again today because it is very much a top-of-mind issue in my riding of York South-Weston and with my constituents.

I have heard over the past three and a half weeks or so members opposite with the government repeatedly rise and mention the activities of previous governments. On the matter of housing, I thought I would do a little bit of research, and just for the benefit of the members opposite here's what I came up with in terms of affordable housing built in my riding between 1990 and 1995, because that's a period of five years that the members opposite like to reference on numerous occasions. In my

riding of York South-Weston during the term of that government, from 1990 to 1995, we saw the construction of more than 400 affordable homes: at the Hickory Tree Road Co-op, 73 homes; at the Chord Housing Co-op, 136 homes; at the Humberview Housing Co-op, 140 homes; at La Paz Co-op, 62 homes—more than 400 homes made possible by the affordable housing plan of the government of the day.

I ask, what have we seen over the past three and a half years in my riding of York South-Weston in terms of new affordable housing? Zip, zilch, zero, nada, not a single one. None. They're pitching a shutout. As we go into hockey playoff season, perhaps that's a term we can use. But they have not built a single one. So when I go around and speak to my constituents and I ask them which government is having the greatest impact on their day-to-day lives today, they talk about the present government, and when it comes to housing, this government has not delivered. It has failed, and not just in York South-Weston but across the entire province.

Last week, I started going down this path, and unfortunately my time was cut short, so I'm going to continue to pursue it with great vigour, I hope.

This government announced in its budget that it was going to spend \$392 million on housing initiatives. We know that that is all federal money. There is not a single cent—perhaps I'll go through the “zero, zilch, nada”—of provincial money. What's insulting to my constituents is that, of this \$392 million, they had to wait almost a year and a half to two years to even think about having this money utilized to help some of the most vulnerable Ontarians. Why did they have to wait? They had to wait because there was a sandbox squabble between this provincial government and their federal counterparts. So, in fact, there is no new money for housing in this province as a result of this budget. It's money that, frankly, should have been spent last year or the year before that.

Of the money that the government says it's going to spend, we've been told that \$127 million is to be used to rehabilitate and build new affordable housing. There is a problem with that figure, a very serious problem, because in this city of Toronto alone, the monies that are needed to rehabilitate affordable housing through the Toronto Community Housing Corp., TCHC, are \$300 million for urgent and essential repairs.

1630

I want to read a quote from a prominent tenant activist and TCHC resident with regard to the provincial government's plan to build new and rehabilitate existing affordable housing. This is her reaction to the monies the provincial government has announced:

“We know that the \$127 million for the entire province is insufficient to both create new affordable housing and rehabilitate existing housing. The Liberals said that they would do things differently but they are perpetuating the same policy of letting the homes of Ontario's poorest people fall apart. The government takes credit when it invests in new housing but lets our existing housing fall further and further into disrepair.”

That was a statement made by Kay Bromfield, who is with a group called Strong Foundations, Strong Futures, calling for a full investment in repairing the existing affordable housing stock here in the city of Toronto, which we know requires \$300 million, not \$127 million, as this government is putting forth.

In my riding of York South–Weston, just one property at 33 Gabian Way requires an investment of \$3 million to repair the building, and we're talking about essential repairs; we're talking about things like plumbing, heating and safety devices. These are things that make a real difference in the lives of people, yet this government, through its actions and through its lack of follow-through, is short-changing the residents of 33 Gabian Way in my riding, as they are short-changing the residents of affordable housing throughout the city of Toronto and indeed across the entire province of Ontario.

What's interesting, though, is that this government knows full well the extent of this problem. I was very interested to read that back in November 2005, in response to a couple of questions put forward by my colleague from Beaches–East York, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing acknowledged the great problem that exists. He said back then, on that day, when I was suppose it was convenient to do so, "There's no question about the fact that something has to be done about upgrading the social housing that currently exists out there." That was the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the same one we have today. He went on, then, to answer a question from the then-member for Toronto–Danforth: "Returning to the issue that the member has raised, there's no question about it: If we want to maintain the social housing stock that's out there, it's going to be necessary to upgrade that." That was the quote at the time.

Here we are a year and a half later, and what are we seeing? We're seeing negligence; we're seeing a lack of commitment. We're not seeing the level of investments we need to provide all Ontarians with good, decent, affordable housing for them and their children.

I referenced this last week when I referenced one of my constituents who's been waiting with her three children for affordable housing. They've been on the waiting list for 12 years. It's not a localized problem. I'm glad that the member for Peterborough is here this afternoon, because one of his constituents wrote to me and she talked about the lack of affordable housing in her community. She mentioned that the wait for rent-geared-to-income housing in Peterborough for a single person is up to 15 years long. So whether it's in Toronto, our largest city, or in a medium-sized centre like Peterborough, Ontarians are being forced to wait 12, 14 and 15 years for affordable housing. That's not acceptable to my party. It shouldn't be acceptable to any member of this Legislature.

Interjection.

Mr. Ferreira: That may well be the case, but as I stated earlier, in my riding of York South–Weston what we've seen is a bunch of empty promises. I will reiterate:

Between 1990 and 1995, more than 400 units built; between 2003 and today in York South–Weston, zero. York South–Weston, just so the member is aware, is one of the neediest ridings in this province, where the average household income is \$45,000, where the unemployment rate, as a result of this government's flawed job strategy, continues to creep up into double digits. In fact, the unemployment rate in my riding is about double what it is in the entire city of Toronto.

I want to go back to the—

Interjection.

Mr. Ferreira: The member persists. His government, in 2003, campaigned on a promise that they were going to build 20,000 units of affordable housing. That's what they campaigned on. We have heard from members of this government who have admitted that they have failed miserably on that front. The figure that they float is much less than 20,000; it is perhaps one third of 20,000. That's not good enough. The government has not delivered. But of course, it's just one in a lengthy, lengthy laundry list of broken promises. I can see my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke demonstrating the lengthy list of broken promises that we've seen this government deliver over the past three and a half years.

With the dearth of affordable housing that we have in this province, tenants and low-income, modest income Ontarians are forced to make some very difficult decisions in terms of where they can live, where they can afford to live. I've seen in my riding some of the deplorable conditions in which parents are forced to raise their families because it's the only kind of housing that they can afford. I've spoken of those issues and the terrible state of those buildings on prior occasions in this House.

Just last week, we heard of another deplorable situation in the city of Hamilton, where tenants were paying very good money to live in a building that was perhaps about to collapse. I want to read just a couple of lines here from a story that appeared in the Hamilton Spectator last week. The headline was "Unsafe Building Emptied," and I read: "Three dozen Hamilton apartment dwellers are homeless after their downtown building was evacuated yesterday amid fears of imminent collapse."

"The four-storey, 15-unit Ambassador Heights building on St. Joseph's Drive was emptied after engineers declared it unsafe."

Those are the kinds of conditions that tenants in Hamilton, in Toronto, in Windsor, up in north and eastern Ontario and perhaps even in Peterborough are forced to live in, because that's the only housing that's available at their modest levels of income. This is why we need a comprehensive plan to invest in public housing in this province. To that end, this government hasn't delivered. They haven't lived up to their promises.

I've got a few minutes left. I want to move on to a couple of other issues of concern to the residents of my riding, and specifically with regard to their city of Toronto. This budget fails the city of Toronto, no ands, ifs or buts about it. It does not address the needs of this

city for housing, for public transit, for social services, some of which were downloaded by the previous government, now the official opposition, but which this present government promised to alleviate. They promised to fix that downloading. What have we seen? Again, we haven't seen that promise delivered upon.

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But here, I want to read out some select quotes that appeared in the media shortly after this budget was delivered. It talks about how this government, which, as we know, presently holds the bulk of the seats in the city of Toronto—and they're going to have to account for that in October—has failed the people of Toronto. First of all, our mayor, David Miller, says, "This budget is an extremely disappointing one for the city of Toronto."

From the Toronto Sun, their city columnist, Rob Granatstein, writes, "For Toronto? Nothing. Thanks for coming out. Uploading social programs and provincial drug benefits from the city to the province as had been hoped? Forget about it."

"Toronto doesn't deserve to be hammered like this."

I go on. This was from an editorial from the Toronto Star: "Toronto also was disappointed on public transit.... Queen's Park has not restored its share of operating funding to the Toronto Transit Commission, which was cut by the Conservatives. Without such funding, service and long-term planning will continue to suffer."

This is another interesting quote, which comes from a member of Toronto city council who actually, I believe, is a Conservative, but I thought it would be a good quote to share with the other members here: "It's a terrible budget for the city—it leaves the budget next week in crisis"—he's referring to the city budget. "There are no solutions and we are hundreds of millions of dollars in the hole. We got zero. Nada. Bupkis. Goose eggs. Absolutely nothing. And the city's in a lot of trouble." That was Councillor Minnan-Wong, who I know was a former colleague of the member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): And a Tory candidate in the next provincial election.

Mr. Ferreira: Perhaps he is.

So the residents of Toronto are being faced with a fairly substantial hike in their property taxes as a result of the shortfall due to the failing of this budget for the city of Toronto.

I heard some comments about transit. Well, we've got vanity projects that are being rolled out: the subway up to north of Steeles. I'd say that there are perhaps a number of more worthwhile and more practical transit initiatives that have been proposed by the city of Toronto. Just a couple of weeks ago the Toronto Transit Commission put out an impressive plan for a network of light rail lines across this city. It calls for an investment of \$6 billion over the course of a couple of decades, but it would immeasurably improve public transit in this city and it would essentially assist the residents of my riding of York South-Weston. If we take a look at those plans, they call for a light rail line along Eglinton Avenue West;

they call for a light rail line going up Jane Street. That would enhance the quality of life for my residents.

What do we hear from this government on this plan? We hear nothing. There was no new transit money announced in this budget—not a single cent. But we do hear talk of publicly subsidizing private transit. Now, the members in this House will know that one of my favourite topics is the Blue22, the high-speed train that members of this government appear to be willing to ram through, to railroad my community with. I say this: The people of York South-Weston, the people of Toronto, want investment in public transit and we don't see that in this budget. We don't see investment in public transit, just as we do not see investment in affordable housing. At the end of the day, it's the residents of York South-Weston and the residents of Toronto who suffer and who lose out.

I've got a minute left and I also look forward to responding to the interjections of colleagues on both sides of the House. The province is at a state where it requires leadership. This budget document that was tabled in this House two weeks ago shows very little in the way of that leadership. It is devoid of solutions to meet the needs of some of the neediest Ontarians. Many of those Ontarians live in my riding and they have said to me on the streets of my riding, "Where is the money for affordable housing? Where is the money for public transit? Where is the money that will make a difference in my life?" They don't see it in this budget. This government has failed the people of York South-Weston and the province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It was indeed somewhat informative, I guess, to listen to the remarks of my colleague the member from York South-Weston. I appreciate that he got a letter from a constituent of mine in Peterborough, but I'd like to reflect on what this government has done over the last three and a half years in terms of housing.

After a period of time in my riding of Peterborough—a decade where there was no housing built—in the last three and a half years, we've had three major projects: The Woollen Mill project has come on stream, the River Ridge project has come on stream, and on April 20, along with my federal colleague, I will be able to attend the opening of the Maryland Avenue project—a very interesting one, which is a former convent of the Sisters of the Precious Blood in Peterborough, who, because of declining numbers in that particular cloister of sisters, sold off their property. A developer came forward to come up with a plan to take advantage of this government's commitment to provide new housing and, indeed, that project will be open on April 20.

It's interesting to see the actions this afternoon of the member from York South-Weston to not support our budget, to not support the increase in minimum wage, to not support the Ontario child benefit that has been endorsed by three former Premiers of the province of Ontario—the very distinguished Bill Davis, Premier Rae and Premier Peterson—who have looked at the new

Ontario child benefit and said, "This is the most impressive social initiative in Ontario in the last 40 years." It's been endorsed by June Callwood, who has been at the forefront of poverty in Ontario for the last two decades, Charles Pascal, a former deputy minister in their government and the chair of the Atkinson Foundation, endorsed this program, so it's time—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I'm pleased to rise to respond to the comments of my colleague from York South–Weston. I must say I was in the House last week when the new member from York South–Weston made his maiden speech. But the situation was that it was an opposition day and I had so little time left to speak myself that I didn't use any of it, and I told him, "I can't use any of that to congratulate you on not only your maiden speech, but your election to the House." So I'm going to take that opportunity now, to congratulate you for both.

There's one thing I can say about the member for York South–Weston. We are very different, in coming from different parts of the province and having to represent very different constituencies. But I will say that in a similar way, I very much appreciate the persistence and the passion with which he attacks the issues that matter most to the people he represents.

So many times that's going to be a reason for a gap and a schism between himself and myself, because the people who I represent have very different needs, and many times I will articulate the fact that the attention that is being paid to the needs of Toronto does not help the people I represent in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

What I do appreciate is that the member from York South–Weston takes that same kind of vigour and zeal in representing the people he is standing up for. He talks about, today, the woeful failure of this McGuinty budget of 2007 and, while some of those issues are of less gravity for me, he still points out many, many inconsistencies in this budget. What he points out over and over again as well is the fact that the government says one thing and does another—says one thing, does another. You could just play that tape over and over again, because it's an endless refrain; it will be repeated forever. This government says one thing and does another.

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Ms. Martel: It's a pleasure to make some comments on the remarks made by my colleague from York South–Weston. It's a delight to have him in this House and to have him as part of our caucus and it's great to see him here today standing up for the needs of residents in York South–Weston.

He focused on housing, and well he should, because the McGuinty Liberals made a very specific promise in the last election. They were going to build 20,000 affordable housing units. The member was generous in suggesting that perhaps a third of that has been built. Not even a quarter of that has been built, as we found out

through the estimates process when the former housing critic for the NDP, Mr. Prue, was asking questions of the minister. So not even a quarter of that 20,000 has been built in three and a half years under this Liberal government.

It's not as if the government didn't have the money, for goodness' sake. Over two years ago, \$392 million was allocated by the federal government to Ontario to build affordable housing, and because Mr. McGuinty was more interested in squabbling with the feds than he was in building affordable housing, that money didn't get spent when it could have been spent. The losers were those who continued to wait and wait in towns across this province for affordable housing. If you look at the budget, it says that only \$182 million of that \$392 million is going to be spent this year. So where is the balance, the \$210 million that was already allocated by the feds? How come the government of Ontario isn't spending the full \$392 million that it got from the feds this year? God knows there's a need. How come the government isn't spending the balance of \$210 million on affordable housing?

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's a pleasure to comment on the Ontario 2007-08 budget, a budget that shows something that in years past under previous governments had been decidedly lacking, and that is leadership.

One of the things this budget does, and does very well, is to correct a terrible inequity. This year the Ontario budget takes responsibility for social housing and social assistance currently funded by a device called GTA pooling, and it uploads them. So finally we have a government uploading and not downloading.

What is pooling? Pooling is a concept that was introduced by the Conservative government 10 years ago whereby funds are taken from municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto and channelled into the city of Toronto, without any benefit or accountability to the taxpayers of all those fast-growing cities around the 905 area. In the area that I represent in Mississauga, the city of Mississauga faces a long-term labour shortage, and the intent of pooling was that somehow or other people were sending money into the city of Toronto, whereas in fact 60,000 people per day commute more into the city of Mississauga than leave Mississauga. So the end of pooling for the city of Mississauga relieves a tax burden of \$40 million over the span of seven years, each and every year. Over the span of seven years, that will go from a net drain of \$40 million a year to the taxpayers of Mississauga down to zero.

That's leadership. That's one of the things this 2007-08 budget does, and does effectively. That's one of the things that all of the cities in the fast-growing 905 belt have been talking about for ages and ages. That was one way in which this government listened, this government took action and this government fixed a problem.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for York South–Weston for his reply.

Mr. Ferreira: I want to thank the member for Peterborough, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—especially for his flattering words at the beginning—the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Mississauga West for their comments.

To the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I think in fact there are many similarities between the concerns of the people of York South–Weston and those of the people of his riding. They may be geographically separated, but I'll bet that at the end of the day the discussions around the dinner table are very similar.

The member from Peterborough, and I want to thank him, raised one of my other favourite topics. He brought up the issue of the minimum wage. It is this government's plan to increase that minimum wage, which was like a deathbed conversion, right? Before February 8, in York South–Weston there was not going to be an increase to the minimum wage, and then, following the government's defeat, two days later we had the Minister of Finance saying that poverty was now his issue, it was on his agenda and, lo and behold, now we're being told that the minimum wage is going to increase.

The sad reality is that Ontarians, those who work very hard for the lowest wages, have to wait three years to get up to \$10.25. In the year I was born, if the minimum wage that existed back then existed today, on an index to inflation, the minimum wage in Ontario today would be \$9.97, not three years from now but today, and what this government is saying to those very hard-working Ontarians who work for \$8 or \$8.50 an hour is that they have to wait three more years.

They're also saying the same thing, incidentally, to those who receive ODSP. The constituent from Peterborough points out that the 2% increase is woefully inadequate and too late. It doesn't even cover the cost of living, leaving us to fall even further behind low-income Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Delaney: Monsieur le Président, je veux partager mon temps aujourd'hui avec mon collègue le membre de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

What a difference four short years can make. Four years ago, at the doors, people honestly questioned whether Ontario would be able to have publicly funded, publicly delivered health care and education anymore. For more than eight years, the Conservative government had told them that health care wasn't sustainable, even as that government steadily slashed funding, fired nurses, closed hospitals and did all it could to cause people to lose confidence in health care and to turn to that government's real secret agenda, which was to be able to privatize Ontario's health care system and to turn it all over to insurance companies and HMOs.

In 2004, Ontario reaffirmed its commitment to publicly funded, publicly delivered, publicly accountable health care. In Mississauga and Brampton, that means capital projects at all three of our local hospitals: Credit Valley, William Osler and Trillium. I look forward to the groundbreaking on the phase 2 expansion of the Credit

Valley Hospital in the very near future, as this government keeps its commitment to health care in western Mississauga with those badly needed 140 new beds, with the new complex continuing care unit; with expansions to the maternity suite, with the ability to serve more people in the emergency department, with the already delivered new linear accelerator for cancer care, with the new family medicine teaching unit, and with the partnership with the University of Toronto at Mississauga, to teach young doctors in Mississauga so that more of them will practise medicine in Mississauga.

Contrast this action: promises made and kept to the citizens of western Mississauga with the type of reality the Tories would promote for Ontario.

I spoke to a good friend from Chicago recently whose personal circumstances tell Ontario what the Tory party has in store for them. My friend Rick had had a triple bypass not that long ago and just recently was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He can't even think about switching jobs because he knows nobody will consider him a good insurance risk and justify hiring him. His monthly health care insurance premiums are about \$600. That, for my Tory friends whose Magna budget four years ago showed they couldn't master enough arithmetic to calculate that a \$5.6-billion budget deficit amounts to an annual health care premium, after taxes, of about \$7,200. Ask Rick if he'd be willing to pay Ontario's top rate for health insurance and he'd calculate Ontario's top rate as an 87% saving on what he's paying now, and he is nowhere near the income bracket to pay Ontario's top premium rate. That's a sobering thought for any middle-class family even thinking of voting Conservative.

The US health care system just keeps on taking. There are deductibles on many medical expenses, and HMOs pay for things that Ontario health care providers just do not: executive salaries that run to tens of millions of dollars annually—they make Hydro look like a piker—sky-high malpractice premiums, litigation costs, shareholder returns, sales, advertising, marketing, uncollected debt, and the expenses go on and on. And who pays for these added administrative burdens, none of which so much as fix a cut finger? Why, the US policyholder, of course.

1700

That's why this budget of 2007-08 continues Ontario's progress towards a sustainable, cost-effective, well-managed, publicly run, publicly funded, publicly accountable health care system that is justifiably the envy of the world. And that's why, despite the fact that it serves and is run by fallible and very human staff and management, it's still by far the best system of its kind anywhere in the world. That's why this government and this budget reaffirmed their commitment to keeping Ontarians healthy and to curing them when they're sick. That's why Ontarians can see the progress they voted for in 2003 already. That's why the progress they will vote for in 2007 will keep them healthier longer.

That's why the baby boom supports this Ontario budget, because without the firm commitment of the

government they elected four years ago, that baby boom generation would be told by a Tory government that they're out of luck and they're on their own. That's why baby boomers, unlike Tories, can do the math. They know the chief cause of personal bankruptcy in the United States is the inability to pay catastrophic health care costs. Each year, some 500,000 American families need to declare personal bankruptcy because HMOs want to be paid. Those US families lose their homes, their savings, their retirement benefits and their assets and possessions. And I'll bet none of them would vote for the type of health care option that Tory budgets and Tory policies were leading us toward.

As a rule of thumb—and it's pretty accurate—what's true in the US more or less applies in Canada if you divide by 10. That would mean—500,000 divided by 10—an annual 50,000 bankruptcies if Canada ran according to Tory policies. That means about 17,000 of those bankruptcies every year would be in Ontario. With about 700,000 people, Mississauga makes up a little more than five and a third per cent of Ontario's population. Unlike the measures proposed in this budget and in the last three, a Tory budget would expose the 5.38% of Ontarians who live in Mississauga to those 17,000 annual bankruptcies. That means each year under the outcome of Tory policies, about 915 Mississauga families can expect to go bankrupt because they can't pay their private sector medical bills. Not a neighbourhood would be untouched by this entirely foreseeable and entirely preventable tragedy. But Ontarians can see the government's policies and those of its opponents very clearly. That's why they chose Liberal policies in 2003 and that's why they will choose Liberal policies and a Liberal vision again in 2007.

Earning the confidence of Ontarians with this 2007-08 budget means investing in the health of the 13 million people who make Ontario their home. They know that wait times are getting shorter even in western Mississauga with its strong and continuing growth. Unlike former governments that never even measured wait times, now people can see wait times across Ontario and they can also see progress in bringing them down. That's why of the 46 cents of every taxpayer dollar spent on health in Ontario, wait times, improving efficiency and accountability, promoting wellness, preventing illness, increasing access to doctors and other health providers and shortening wait times represent the very areas where Ontarians want their money spent. That means the multimillion-dollar annual management salaries and benefits packages will stay south of the border, along with the advertising, marketing, sales, litigation, bad debt and other expenses that we don't have in Ontario now and we don't need in Ontario ever.

In Credit Valley Hospital, we've been funded for more hip and knee replacements and more cataract surgery. The Ministry of Health has paid for more hours on our existing MRI machines and linear accelerators, and we got our fourth linear accelerator a full year ahead of schedule. I'm optimistic about what we can do at Credit

Valley in the future, because we have a management team that has shown repeatedly it can run the facility within its budget and build major projects on time and within budget. We have staff at Credit Valley who talk with one another and who keep their patients and their community first, as they should be.

We have more nurses working at Credit Valley and their jobs are overwhelmingly full-time ones. We have more foreign-trained doctors getting certified and working at Credit Valley, because Ontario set out to break the logjam and succeeded in getting more foreign-trained and experienced health professionals certified and working to help Ontarians. It took measures in four budgets and it got the results that people can see every time they walk into any of the three hospitals that serve Mississauga and Brampton.

This Ontario budget works for health care providers who remember that the trust and the resources of the people of Ontario mean their priority is always the people of Ontario and not themselves. That's why this budget is the fourth instalment of how health care in Ontario is working for the people of the city of Mississauga.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): I'm delighted and honoured to be able to debate this very important budget. I've said to all the people in my riding that it's the best budget we have seen for decades.

I was surprised last week when I heard the member from Erie—Lincoln saying that nobody is talking about this budget. I was speaking to some of the media people after, and the answer I got was, "Mr. Lalonde, the budget is so good. Usually we would criticize something that is not too good, but this time the budget is so good, it meets the requirement of what we were told was needed in the province."

Our Minister of Finance had some consultations, and the standing committee on finance and economic affairs had 10 consultations across the province, and this is what we are seeing in the budget today. After doing the consultations from one end to the other, or from the four corners of this beautiful province, we came down with a budget that meets the requirements of low-income people. This is very important, especially when I hear the member from York South—Weston saying that his area is the lowest-paid area in the city of Toronto. I was able to do some door-to-door campaigning during the election and this was the word all along: that they want an increase in the minimum wage. Today, this is what we are giving to the people in his own riding and the rest of the province, and he's not satisfied yet. You know why? When I was talking to the media, the media said, "We'll do some coverage whenever there are some negative parts of the budget," but today they haven't found any.

One of the very important parts of that budget was the education tax. I have to tell you, I have a chart here which was prepared by the CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, way back in 2002 and 2004. Why is it that in some areas—where the Minister of Finance of the previous government was—for a

building with a \$500,000 assessment, the city of Cornwall today is paying 444% higher than the former riding of Mr. Eves at the time? When I look at Ottawa, it's paying 384% more than the people in Parry Sound are paying. When I look at my own riding, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, it's 321% higher than the other area.

We've always said, especially the municipalities bordering the other provinces, that they do give incentives to others we can't, but how can we attract industry when we turn around and we tell the investors that the taxes are so much over here? So this is what we have done: We went out; we have listened to the people and what they had to say. It's been going on for a long time. The previous government could not fix it. We are fixing it over a period of six or seven years; I believe that's what it is. We want to level that off to be able to attract industries in a small rural area. This is exactly what we have to do.

1710

Also, we said that we would balance our budget, definitely, especially after taking over from the previous government, with a \$5.5-billion deficit which was hidden. Again, the member for Erie–Lincoln said, "No matter that you are able to spend because you have more than doubled our budget." It's not fair to say that. I have to say that even though in 2003 the budget was \$68 billion, they ended up with \$70-some million, really a deficit of \$5.5 billion.

We said that we would create jobs, and we definitely did. When I was looking at the statistics today, we had created 327,000 jobs in Ontario since the election of the McGuinty government in October 2003. But one thing we have to remember is that 82.5% of those jobs are full-time jobs, permanent jobs—82.5%; 70% are high-value positions. So what do we have to cry about? Seventy percent are high-value positions and 82.5% are full-time jobs.

We also said that we would look after the families with kids. When I look at this budget, nobody can criticize that. I could tell you that when I look at this budget, I see that as of July 1 this year, families with incomes lower than \$20,000 will receive \$250 per child. It goes right up to 2011: They will receive up to \$1,100 per child.

Mr. Yakabuski: Back to the future.

Mr. Lalonde: "Back to the future"—exactly, as the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is saying. Definitely, we want to make sure that these kids have something to eat and also are able to meet the others at school.

When I look at housing, we said that we would take care of that, even though they're saying we haven't done anything. But again, the member for York South–Weston said that during the Bob Rae government, they had built so many. But they built so much at that time in their area, the rest of the province didn't get it. We are a government that looks after the whole province. If we give some in one area, we will look at the others.

When I look at the list of all of those municipalities that received some grant on March 22, there was a total

of \$139,000,976 given out to 185 municipalities in Ontario. That's well received. It's not every year that you'll see this, but the previous government has never done that. When I say they've never done that, instead of coming out with a budget like this, they downloaded to the municipalities. Just in my own riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, there was a shortfall of \$23 million after the downloading. Today, everybody is paying. They are crying, "We haven't got any money to fix the roads." Why? It's because the previous government didn't take care of the rural areas.

When I look, on March 20, the federal government came out with a budget. They were very happy to say, "We will reduce the paper burden for all small businesses by 20% by 2009." In the last 15 months, we have reduced the paper burden by 23% already—that was at the end of February 2007—and we are aiming for higher than that. We are working every month. It is the Small Business Agency of Ontario that is working to meet the requirements of what the small business operators would like to see.

Another thing that we got stuck with is MPAC. When the people are crying about their residential assessment, who has put this in place? The previous government. And now they're trying to blame us. When I see some of the members in the front row on the other side saying, "The McGuinty government hasn't done anything," we did a lot more than what they have done. We have stopped this. The next assessment won't come up before 2009, and then it will be done every four years. Any increase will be divided into four years, will be—I don't have the right word.

Interjection: The average.

Mr. Lalonde: The average will be divided into four years.

I have to say that this government knew what they were talking about, and that's why we have decided to consult. We have listened to the people and we did a great job. I have to congratulate the Minister of Finance for doing such a great job for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I listened with interest to the budget deliberations of the member from Mississauga West and the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. I find it somewhat telling: no mention of the Ontario government debt. I guess this goes without saying. No mention of tax cuts. No mention of the loss of manufacturing jobs across this great province and, in particular, rural Ontario and eastern Ontario. There seems to be no connection at all there with respect to what I consider an economic law that reducing taxes can boost the private sector and can boost job creation, in particular given the problem we have right now in losing jobs in our factories. So no mention of the debt. No mention of the WSIB unfunded liability, which is a debt, and I understand that particular debt is growing. I would hope the government would explain to us some of the figures on that. No mention of the kind of debt that

people see on their electrical bills, the debt that they are required to help pay down as consumers of electricity.

I guess I'm not surprised there would be no mention of Caledonia, no mention of the C word, with this particular government. A promise was made for fulsome compensation for people who have lost value in their homes and have suffered under this occupation, and nothing in this budget for that.

Another big issue is farmers. I think in particular of tobacco farmers. Nothing in this budget for tobacco farmers; no indication at all of any reaching out to the federal government to help out on that one.

Ms. Martel: In response to comments made by the government members, let me say a couple of things.

First of all, with respect to the minimum wage, it's a disgrace in the province of Ontario that someone working 40 hours a week at the minimum wage is living below the poverty level, and that is the reality today. Of 200,000 mainly immigrant and women workers who make the minimum wage now, 61% are adults; 64% are women; 48% have some post-secondary education. They are using food banks. They are using clothing banks. They are barely making ends meet. And there are another 1.2 million who are making below \$10 an hour working full-time.

What does this government hold out? This government holds out a minimum wage of \$10.25 an hour three years from now. I can tell you that with the cost of living at that time, those workers, at \$10.25 an hour, are still going to be living below the poverty level: working 40 hours a week and living below the poverty level. There is something wrong with that, folks, in a province as prosperous as Ontario.

Let me make a comment about the child benefit, because the member was quick to say, "These families are going to get a down payment of \$250 this July." If this government only lived up to the promise that it made in 2003 to fully end the clawback of the national child benefit, those families would be getting \$1,500 a year. But instead, this government steals back \$225 million of federal money every year from the poorest families in Ontario. Shame on you.

1720

People should look at this child benefit and think of it as another McGuinty promise just waiting to be broken, because that's exactly what it is. This was supposed to be a poverty budget. The poorest families in this province are falling further and further behind, and this government is doing nothing to deal with that reality.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I would like to thank the member for Mississauga West and the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for their fine comments on this budget.

This is a budget that Premier McGuinty, with his leadership, and Minister Sorbara, the Minister of Finance, should be very proud of, because it is touching all our communities, 13 million people in Ontario—children, seniors, injured workers—creating jobs, taking care of public health care, public education. Actually, the

leader of the official opposition, John Tory, came out after this budget and said, "I can't think of one thing I would reverse," and then today he comes and votes against the budget. What kind of wishy-washy type of leadership is he bringing forward?

The leader of the third party somehow drifted out of this chamber and would not vote on the budget, because the budget was one that passed the test. The people of Ontario said that this is a great budget. It is affecting 1.3 million children, who will be helped by the new Ontario child benefit. Some 155,000 injured workers on WSIB will see an increase of 7.5% over the next three years.

In the area of Mississauga, the inequity of pooling has been addressed. After being downloaded by the Conservative government, pooling is being addressed and the city of Mississauga will be getting \$40 million that it will be able to spend now on its social services, which is much needed. That's after many expenditures on our hospitals, on our community centres, on our infrastructure, on our transportation. This is a wonderful budget.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I am pleased to add some comments to the speeches from the member for Mississauga West and the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, better known as the goalie and coach of the Legiskaters hockey team.

One surprise item in this budget that I'd like to comment on is the new 13% diamond tax that certainly caught the miners by surprise. I had the pleasure of attending the Meet the Miners reception here at Queen's Park last week. There, De Beers, the diamond mining company, had a booth set up and a representative spoke right after the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The minister, in his talk, talked about how the mining industry was being consulted yesterday, the day before and last week and tomorrow. And then, right after, he was followed up by the representative from De Beers, who talked about this Third World taxation policy that caught them completely by surprise after they had spent \$1 billion opening this diamond mine, which is going to provide a lot of employment for the Attawapiskat First Nation and others, and generate revenue for the province of Ontario, and jobs, and how they were surprised because they weren't consulted; it came out of the blue. He made the comment that this Third World taxation policy may make this the one and only diamond mine that is ever developed in the province.

I note in today's *Globe and Mail*: "Native Community Decries 'Tax Grab' at Diamond Mine—Ontario's New 13% Levy 'Lose-Lose' for First Nations, Chief Tells Government."

It went on to say, "We should have been consulted," Chief Carpenter wrote in an April 4 letter to the Premier.

"This increase constitutes little more than a tax grab by your government that will not benefit our First Nation or others," he said."

This is the way that this government is consulting with First Nations. It's the way it's treating industry and the job and wealth creators in this province.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I look to the member from Mississauga West to reply at this time.

Mr. Delaney: I thank the members for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, Nickel Belt, Mississauga East and Parry Sound-Muskoka for their comments.

To the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, on the watch of his government, I believe his government added some \$28 billion to Ontario's long-term debt—\$28 billion. They cut taxes before they balanced the budget. That's pretty simple. This is the government that sold the 407, that created a crisis in education—the list goes on and on.

I do, however, want to reserve some comments for the member for Nickel Belt, who apparently doesn't seem to mind Ontario losing an estimated 90,000 jobs. I recall talking to a restaurant owner in Mississauga. I said, "What if the minimum wage were increased at a stroke, as proposed?" He said, "I'll ask my accountant on that." He came back to me and he said, "We calculated it, and if that measure actually passed, it would cost our restaurant \$2,500 each pay period, \$5,000 a month, \$60,000 a year." I said, "What are your options?" He said, "It's simple. I'd put the place up for sale and I would be out of business in a year. I cannot pass it along." That's the challenge facing so many other owners of small businesses, particularly franchisees, and especially in the area that I'm in. They simply cannot pass it along.

My colleague from Mississauga East said that he's proud of this budget. I sort of see that sentiment and raise it. I'd say we've had four budgets, and in those four budgets, this is a government that has made a difference in Ontario and put Ontario finally back on the track of being financially sustainable and responsible.

Finally, to my colleague and, if I may say, my friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka: I'll play hockey behind Norm Miller any day of the week.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? I recognize the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm pleased to be recognized, Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to join this debate on the budget, Bill 187.

You know, I've listened to members of the government speak today, and they talk about how proud they are of this budget, proud of the fact that they are the government that took spending in this province from \$68 billion when they took office to \$91 billion in this budget. They're a very, very fortunate group of people to have revenues that healthy through that period of time. But they've lost the opportunity and they've lost their vision and they've lost sight of their priorities in the province since they've taken office in 2003. That increase represents \$4,500 to every household in this province. When I travel around the province and in my riding and I ask people, "Do you see \$4,500 worth of return to you from the McGuinty government since they have taken office?" the answer is an unequivocal "Absolutely not." Absolutely not.

What else have we gotten from the McGuinty government? Some 120,000 manufacturing jobs gone in this province. These are among our best jobs. The high-paying jobs, fully benefited—they're gone. In my riding, Smurfit-MBI shut down in Pembroke—good jobs, high-paying, with full benefits and pension. Commonwealth Plywood is shutting down their round log veneer plant in Pembroke.

They're talking about 329,000 jobs created under this government? Well, contrast that to the almost 1.1 million jobs created under the previous government. So if you want to talk about the numbers, let's talk about the numbers. My goodness gracious, 329,000 jobs created, but they are not replacing the jobs that have been lost. Those are high-paying, quality jobs, fully benefited and with a pension, and you're replacing them with jobs that offer much, much less.

1730

I want to talk about cuts to tourism. Here we are at a time when United States visitors have dropped off tremendously—one of the lowest numbers on record in the last couple of years—and what does this government do? It cuts the tourism budget, but still has plenty of money to spend on the feel-good, "Vote for us" type of advertising. Look at this. This is unbelievable: This is Living. That's a full-page spread in the Ottawa Citizen, and it was in every single—

The Acting Speaker: I have to ask the member—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Come to order, please. I have to ask the member not to use any props while he's making his presentation. You're going to have to set that down.

Mr. Yakabuski: This here?

The Acting Speaker: Would you please set that down on your desk? Thank you.

Mr. Yakabuski: That doesn't say a word about where you're going in the province of Ontario. You know what that says? "We're the Liberal government. This is your money. Vote for us." That's where they're spending your money on tourism.

I've got another example here. I've got a great business in my riding. It's not really a prop, Mr. Speaker. I'm speaking about Wilderness Tours in my riding. A full page, but does it say anywhere here—

The Acting Speaker: Perhaps you didn't understand me the first time. You can't lift up any ads or any props while you're giving your speech.

Mr. Yakabuski: Is the budget a prop?

The Acting Speaker: If you use it as such, it's a prop, and I'll ask you not to do it again. I recognize the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: That's where this government is spending the people's money: full-page advertisements in the dailies across this province. I've got a few more examples, but I'm not going to show them. So there's your tourism cuts, but they've got money to spread around, saying, "Look at us." This is about making the people say, "Oh, wow, Ontario." But is that ad playing in the United States, in New York? Is it playing in Pennsyl-

vania? No, it's playing here in Ontario. How are you going to increase your tourism numbers to Ontario when you're spreading that only in Ontario? Goodness gracious, it is so unbelievably partisan that they would spend that kind of money on that kind of waste.

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): Where do you go for your vacation, John? Cuba?

Mr. Yakabuski: Never been there, Bruce.

Then we've got the cuts to the Ministry of Agriculture—over \$100 million. What do we get out of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs? We get a full, 27-page pamphlet produced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs telling us how wonderful things are in Ontario. About \$2 million was spent on that. They even sent it out to the members of this assembly. And here's the best part: A brand new publication, 2006-07, but what do they have on the front page? The old Ontario logo. They spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to pay somebody to design a new one and they don't even have it on their own publications. That's the kind of competence and waste of money that this government likes to do.

There's example after example. The Ontario Health Quality Council—I'm not holding it up, Mr. Speaker; I'm just reading from it. I've got seven weekly newspapers in my riding. Every one of them had this inserted inside. You're paying for it, ladies and gentlemen. You're paying so that this government can try to make you believe that they're actually doing something important with your money.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: There's the letter from the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, sent to each and every member, telling you what a wonderful province you're living in—27 pages. You're paying for it, ladies and gentlemen. Farmers in this province could use some of that money to help them, and what are we getting? We're getting partisan publications from the minister to try to make it so that people will vote the Liberals back in. As we've always said, they will pay anything and say anything to get re-elected.

I want to shift gears a little bit to my riding—well, no, not yet, but I'd better soon.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: Okay, but what do we have in this budget? Not a word said about it in the budget speech. The Minister of Finance was trying to slide this one under by cover of darkness—but \$50 million to those poor, struggling Stronachs, \$50 million to Frank and Belinda. Do they not have enough money? Are they poor? Fifty million dollars to Magna to put a little kind of Frank and Belinda university there; \$50 million, and we're going to get something like—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: If you could take your seat, please.

I'm having difficulty hearing the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke because of the reaction of the

House to some of what he's saying. But he does have the floor, and we all need to acknowledge his right to speak. I look forward to returning to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

And don't worry. You'll get sufficient time to make your remarks.

Mr. Yakabuski: So we've got \$50 million for Magna. Apparently they're going to create about 60 graduates. Let me think: If you went to the universities in this province and said, "You know what? We're going to pay you \$1 million per graduate," they're going to buy into it pretty quick—\$1 million per graduate. But this is just payoff, payola, to Magna, to the Stronachs, some of the richest people in this country. Shame on this government. And they hide it.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: First of all I would ask the government members to come to order and allow the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to make his remarks. Secondly, I would ask the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to ensure that his comments are parliamentary in nature.

I return to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: We're concerned about this money being paid out to the Stronachs, yet the people—

The Acting Speaker: The member for Peterborough on a point of order.

Mr. Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to get your view on the use of the word "payola." It would be my understanding that that's a term that's not parliamentary. I would ask you to deliberate on that and ask the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to withdraw that remark.

The Acting Speaker: I return to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and ask him to ensure that his comments are parliamentary.

Mr. Yakabuski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could I ask that I get a little bit of extra time? That point of order obviously was not a proper point of order.

We're going to try to move on from that, because it seems to get under the skin of the Liberals. You know what? The member for Peterborough doesn't want people in his riding to know that \$50 million is going to Magna and the Stronachs, because I'll bet you that the people in Peterborough would like to get their hands on some of that \$50 million. I know that the people in my riding could use some of that \$50 million to help them in their concerns, to help them with the fact that the Madawaska Valley gets turned down for Infrastructure Ontario funding to rebuild their sewage plant, possibly the last one of its kind in the province, a flow-through system for which there are no countermeasures: If something goes wrong, the whole system goes. We could have a real disaster up there, but this government doesn't seem to think that it's a priority to fund that plant. But \$50 million to Magna, no money for Madawaska Valley: We know where this government's priorities are. We certainly do.

Let's talk about property tax assessments. The member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell talked about our

creation of MPAC. This government came to office promising to do something about it. What did they do? They buried their heads in the sand twice. Now, because the pressure is on—in fact, our party has come out with a policy spurred on by the member from Erie—Lincoln, Tim Hudak, that would bring some real reform to property tax assessment—what are they doing? They think they've handed the people some kind of real golden rod here. They're going to say, "We're going to spread that pain over four years." That doesn't cut it. Our party says, "A 5% cap on residential assessments," because we've got to get control of this situation where burgeoning assessments are putting people out of their homes in Ontario. And they only did it when the polls told them they'd better do something about it; otherwise Dalton McGuinty would have buried his head in the sand one more time.

1740

So I ask this government, do you really want to talk about rural Ontario? Let's talk about rural eastern Ontario. Where is the eastern Ontario prosperity fund? You talk about doing something for rural Ontario. Where's the eastern Ontario rural prosperity fund as put forward by my colleague Norm Sterling? Nothing in this budget. Where's an eastern Ontario secretariat under the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade? Nowhere to be seen. And where is a fair share—

The Acting Speaker: Point of order?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It was cancelled by the previous government.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. I'll return to the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke once again.

Mr. Yakabuski: Speaker, I don't need these ridiculous interjections on the part of the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. It's cutting into my time and he knows it's not a point of order. He should be ashamed of himself. He's been here long enough.

Anyway, where's the fair share of the gas tax for rural communities? Where is it in this budget? It is nowhere. At least the federal government recognizes that we, in rural Ontario, pay an inordinate amount of that gas tax in order to get around, get to our jobs, get our kids to schools for after-school activities, get to doctors' appointments or whatever.

We pay an inordinate amount of that gas tax, and what does this government do? Nothing. Nothing for the rural people who pay far more than their fair share. You don't live in apartments in very many instances in Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, or in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, I might add. But you do have to get into your vehicle and you do have to fill that tank and you do pay the gas tax, and this government is doing nothing for rural Ontarians in that regard.

Where is the recognition of the crown land issue and the amount of crown land that municipal governments have to deal with, the infrastructure issue surrounding it, the fire protection and the police protection for that land?

This government talks a good game. When the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus met with this government, they talked a good game about what they might be doing with crown land, but when the rubber met the road, nothing—nothing to deal with crown land, which is such an important issue in rural Ontario. In my riding, almost 50% of the land is crown land, and those municipalities have to deal with all of the problems and services associated with it, but they're not getting any help from the government.

The government put in \$10 million in broadband funding in this budget. That's a good thing, but they were the ones who cancelled the broadband funding in rural Ontario in 2004. They shut it down. So you're only replacing what was there before. You think you're doing a favour but you're three years late.

It's like everything else. It's like all of the measures in this budget: "Oh yeah, we're going to fix this, we're going to fix that, we'll fix that by 2011 or we'll fix that by 2014 or we'll fix that maybe in the next millennium or whatever." That's what you get out of this government. Everything is going to be fixed down the road, down the road. The people in rural Ontario can't wait for "down the road." They need some help from this government now and they're not getting it. They're getting a lot of hollow words from this government but they're not getting the help.

I heard my friend from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell talk about the downloading of roads. I know what I have said about downloading of roads.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Who did that?

Mr. Yakabuski: I wasn't here when it was done, and the system did not work, particularly in rural Ontario. But this government goes and does a whole lot of talking about the bad downloading of roads, and how many thousands of kilometres of roads have they uploaded since they took office? Don't say it all together, guys. Not a one. Not a thousand, not 900, 800, 700, 600, 500, 400, 300, 200, 100—not a single foot; not a single foot of road, and they want to criticize the past government. They're living like it's Shangri-La when it comes to the revenue—revenue is out through the roof—but they're not doing a darn thing to upload some of those highways back from the rural people.

So, you talk a good game but you're not delivering. Shame on you. My goodness, my people in rural Ontario are not impressed at all.

Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus: Doug Struthers. Can I read a newspaper article, Mr. Speaker, or is that a problem?

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: Thank you very much. That was a newspaper article too. I wasn't sure of the difference. But I'm going to learn the rules sometime before I leave here. Somebody took my glasses here.

Doug Struthers, the chair of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus: "The 2007 Ontario budget fails to address major problems that 'threaten the economic health' of rural communities in eastern Ontario."

That is the crux of the matter. This budget does not address the significant problems in eastern Ontario that this government promised they would address, has done nothing to address and continues to ignore. In fact, everything they do is to try to drive a wedge, urban Ontario against rural Ontario. I can tell you that if I was one of you rural members sitting here, I would be very concerned. I would be in those caucus meetings and I would be raising Cain, because your Premier has made a calculation. He says, "I am willing to sacrifice the seat. I'm willing to sacrifice Peterborough; I'm willing to sacrifice Perth-Middlesex; I'm willing to sacrifice Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I'm willing to sacrifice these seats because I've got to make sure that this budget deals with Toronto and not rural Ontario."

So the people in rural Ontario keep asking themselves—and you know, my warden, Janice Visneskie, took over from Warden Bob Sweet, a great fellow. Bob is the past chair of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus. But they just released what they call their prosperity plan, with 51 recommendations. When you have to make 51 recommendations to a government, you know what that tells you? The government doesn't know what it's doing. If you've got to make 51 recommendations, my goodness, where are they getting their information? The wardens' caucus has to tell them what to do in order to help eastern Ontario. Warden Visneskie says they have asked the province to recognize the unique needs of eastern Ontario. "We're hopeful that they'll listen," she said. "It may take some time, but the EOWC, and I, will never give up. A lot hinges on recognizing that our needs are different than those of other areas, including northern Ontario."

That's what we're asking for, that this government would take off the blinders and recognize that we've got real problems in eastern Ontario and do something to fix them.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Martel: In response to the comments made by the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, I know that if he had had more time, he would have wanted to talk about the inadequate funding for long-term-care homes. So I just want to read into the record a press release that was put out by the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors on March 22, the day of the budget, headlined as follows: "Liberals Break Promise to 75,000 Residents of Long-Term-Care Homes." This is what they had to say:

"With virtually nothing in the provincial budget for long-term care, the McGuinty government will be headed into the next election without having fulfilled its pledge to the 75,000 seniors who live in these homes.

"For long-term care, the cupboard is bare....

"Unless the Liberals have a sudden conversion on the way to the polls on October 10, they will have to explain another broken promise—a promise made to long-term-care residents and their families across this province."

"During the last election campaign, the Liberals pledged a \$6,000 increase in annual care funding for

every long-term-care resident. But after four provincial budgets, the funding increase has totalled only about \$2,300.

"For the McGuinty" Liberal "government to deliver on its promise, it will have to inject an additional \$277 million into the operating budgets of long-term-care homes over the next six months." And we know that in this budget, they only gave them \$14 million.

"In the lead-up to the last election, the Liberals identified increased funding for long-term care ... as one of their top priorities. Today, they failed to keep their word. This is a huge disappointment, especially after the Liberals promised after coming to power that they would lead a revolution in long-term care.'...

"While the budget contained \$14 million for the hiring of nurses in long-term care, the reality is that with no money to keep up with inflation, homes will be forced to lay off staff. 'Homes have been given about 50 cents a day more to hire new nurses, but we needed over \$2 a day just to keep the ones we have. We will be laying off three nurses to hire one,' said Donna Rubin."

1750

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I wanted to just make some clarifications. I heard the third party member making some statements earlier which I thought were incorrect. I understand he's new in the House, but he should be reminded that this party has already increased the minimum wage four times and this party is committed to raising minimum wage three more times, when in fact we are going to reach \$10.25, which is higher than his party has even recommended.

In addition to that, it's imperative that this honourable House appreciates how satisfied the regions of York, Halton and Peel are in regard to the social service pooling—that the province of Ontario now is picking up that \$200 million, instead of those three regions paying to the city of Toronto. So Toronto gets the money while those three regions are not paying for it.

In regard to public transportation, the third party indicated there was no money in this budget. This is incorrect. Viva, the transportation system in the region of York, and others have received money. In fact, we received \$85-million-plus in this last budget. Those are monies that are needed to improve public transportation not only in the region of York, but also in the city of Toronto. Otherwise, more cars would come to Toronto.

In addition to that, when this government provided \$670 million last year, most of it, 60% of it, went to the city of Toronto, and only 40% went to the region of York. Those are real dollars, millions of dollars, given to Toronto for public transportation so that together, as a region—not just Toronto, but the 905 and Toronto together—we can have a better transportation system that all of us could use because it's available, it's efficient, it's clean and it's in our best interests.

That is the way public money should be invested. The chair, the mayor, the regional council, the municipality and the region of York are very happy about social service pooling, and I'm pleased with it too.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): I'm very happy to join debate today and to thank my colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. He's a tireless advocate for eastern Ontario. I was pleased also to hear the thoughts from the member from Nickel Belt, who raised a concern that's very near and dear to my heart, which is long-term-care facilities and the lack of investment in this budget for the spaces that we so desperately need right across Ontario. In my city in particular, we need about 250 new beds.

The member from Thornhill was talking a lot about the 905 and Toronto, and how this budget is so great for them. But coming from a rural-suburban riding in eastern Ontario, this budget wasn't that great. That's what my colleague here from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke was alluding to. There were several things that were omitted from this budget that are required for suburban and rural Ottawa and for suburban and rural eastern Ontario.

I look at the long-term-care facilities, for example. There was no direct investment for the Ottawa Congress Centre. There was no mention of upgrading or even funding infrastructure for the Highway 417 split. Water quality at Lynwood Park in Ottawa is still so poor that if the Minister of Agriculture would ever like to drop by there, I could give her a drink of the water and I could have an Erin Brockovich moment, because it's just not potable. Our Algonquin trade school: There was no investment for that, no money. The Minister of Agriculture again has presided over massive cuts to the family farm. The eastern Ontario secretariat and the Eastern Ontario Development Corp.: Despite the fact that every party in this Legislature voted to support both of those initiatives a week after I was elected, this budget had nothing for eastern Ontario yet again.

If they would like to continue to talk about what a great budget this was for Mississauga and Toronto, they forgot, yet again, eastern Ontario, which is shameful considering the Premier has a home there.

Mr. Ferreira: I enjoyed listening to the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who certainly has a most unique and colourful style.

I want to raise some of the issues our party put forward that should have been in this budget which this government ignored: Introduce a \$10 minimum wage for Ontario, effective May 1, 2007, and that the minimum wage henceforth be set annually so the person working 40 hours a week at the minimum wage would earn an amount equal to or greater than the low-income cut-off for a single person living in Toronto, as determined annually by StatsCan. We proposed it; this government said no.

We proposed immediately eliminating the national child benefit clawback; this government said no.

We proposed having the government honour its promises in its 2003 election platform to invest \$300 million in new provincial money to expand Ontario's regulated non-profit child care system and to extend child care assistance to 330,000 children; this government said no.

Further, we proposed allocating sufficient funds for the expansion of health-related programs aimed at low- and moderate-income families, including enhanced prescription drug and vision care and dental care coverage; this government said no in its budget.

For the environment, we proposed cancelling all plans for new nuclear power plants and working with the appropriate agencies to allocate the savings into an aggressive conservation and energy-efficiency plan; this government said no to that.

We proposed allocating an additional one cent of the gas tax to municipalities for public transit; this government said no.

This government has said no to the priorities and the needs of Ontarians. This budget does not address the glaring needs of this province and some of its neediest residents. This government has said no to those people with that budget. That's why we say no to their budget.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: Can I get a couple of extra minutes there, Speaker, for the amount of time I was robbed during the debate? Apparently I won't get unanimous consent.

I want to thank the members for Nickel Belt, Thornhill, Nepean—Carleton and York South—Weston for their comments.

I just want to pick up on the comments of the member for Nickel Belt. I didn't even have time to talk about long-term care in my speech, because I was somewhat focused on eastern Ontario and my own riding. But you know, the previous government redeveloped the D beds in this province, and this government, even under the stark evidence of the need to redevelop B and C beds in this province, has put forth nothing in order to do that. What kind of message is it saying to our seniors and our vulnerable aged in this province when it will not put the investment into B and C beds?

Everyone knows that the need is growing, and it doesn't do you any good to bring out all kinds of regulations on long-term-care homes if you're not going to ensure that the facilities that are required to be able to provide that level of care to people are upgraded. We are going into a crisis in long-term care in this province, and this government has its head in the sand again. I appreciate the member for Nickel Belt raising that; I just didn't have time in mine.

I do want to reiterate one thing: If you want to talk about fairness for rural people in this province, you have to follow the lead of the federal government and give them a share of that gas tax. Their public transportation system is the roads; there are no alternatives. In order to be fair, in order to show that you care about rural people even a little bit, a share of the gas tax is imperative.

The Acting Speaker: It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until later on this evening at 6:45 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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No. L154B

N° L154B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 10 April 2007

Mardi 10 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 10 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 10 avril 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTORAL SYSTEM REFERENDUM ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LE RÉFÉRENDUM RELATIF AU SYSTÈME ÉLECTORAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 21, 2007, on the motion for third reading of Bill 155, An Act to provide for a referendum on Ontario's electoral system / *Projet de loi 155, Loi prévoyant un référendum sur le système électoral de l'Ontario.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'm pleased to participate in this debate because, as some of you know, I've had a long and deep abiding interest in the whole area of democratic reform going back to when I was in opposition. Now, when we are in government, I'm pleased to see our government begin not just one reform but a whole variety. There's a major one that has to be faced sooner or later, in my opinion, and hopefully that's in the next round. But on Bill 155 it's pretty straightforward. I was looking at Hansard and the discussions that we had on a variety of evenings and noticed that some of the same arguments kept recurring. This evening, who knows, depending upon some members who are here, whether we take additional time as well to repeat certain things or to shed some new light on this activity?

But this bill is really about the nature of the referendum, if this is going to pass, which may be recommended by the citizens' assembly, as to how that particular system would proceed, how people would participate in this and how the questions would be drafted etc. I think that has been fairly well outlined in the introduction of the bill. At first reading, the minister went on to describe this particular bill, which essentially is what I've just said: a system that would require Ontarians to have an opportunity to participate in a referendum vote.

I would point out, and a number of other members have pointed out, that it's a rare occurrence to have a referendum here. I think it was a member of the Progressive Conservative Party who talked about a referendum back in, I think, 1832 or thereabouts. That says this is not

taken lightly, it should not be taken lightly and this will be quite an experience for Ontarians.

I would like to introduce something here. I'd refer some members to a little publication that's been around for a while called the Beaver. It's "Canada's History Magazine." I don't know if many of you get it. I find it extremely helpful because it doesn't go on and on and you have to read 45 pages or 100 pages before you learn about a particular event. It gives you capsules of various events in our particular history. But I thought it would be interesting just to note that "Casting a ballot in 1832 differed dramatically from the polling stations of today. Voters publicly announced their choice, putting themselves at the mercy of angry mobs from the side they voted against. The polls would remain open until one full hour had passed without a vote. The system often led to long, chaotic, and violent campaigns as each side 'motivated' the public to vote through intimidation and brute force, all to prevent that silent hour and keep their candidates in the game."

1850

Well, you can imagine. Of course, the evolution of a secret ballot was not the first way in which governments came to pass as well. So it's important to be mindful of all the stages that have already occurred in terms of protecting the privacy and the right of people to vote. The voting system that is there cannot be tampered with. At least that's the design. Any system of course can always be tampered with in some fashion or another, but I think that's an absolute minimum in Ontario and in Canada.

I want to deal with one issue—and it's an issue that my good friend from Beaches–East York and I have some disagreements on—and that is the level at which something becomes valid. The only point I want to make on this one is that there are those who feel—and I feel in certain circumstances, of course—that a 51% vote is valid.

But—I had mentioned this—I sat on the select committee, and my good friend across will know that I personally was not happy with it. The committee outvoted me, so that stands as the recommendation of the committee. At the time, I felt that the level of consensus should be better than just one person over 50%. Times change, issues change, different people participate, the weather affects voting etc. My feeling at the time was that it should be more of a plurality than simply one additional voter. That made it more significant in terms of the position of the electorate, and the legislation reflects this. There has to be 60% of voters to support this

and better than 50%; in other words, 50% plus one and 60% of the ridings.

There are some other jurisdictions that have taken this particular model that we have taken, BC and Prince Edward Island, to name a few. Of course, when you look at our Constitution that was repatriated from England, it wasn't 50% plus one; it was a lot higher. I won't go into it because you will all know that it had to deal with a majority of provinces and a majority of the population.

I will stop there and allow some of my colleagues to add their voice to this bill. I think it's a fairly straightforward one. It outlines the procedures, the process and the system by which people, for the first time in over 100 years, will have a chance to express their views through a referendum. It's certainly the first time in Ontario that we have ever had the opportunity to vote through a referendum on the nature of our electoral process.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to respond to the comments from my colleague from Ottawa Centre. Certainly this is a work in progress in terms of this referendum and what's trying to be accomplished. I'm going to be speaking for the viewing public in about 10 minutes on this particular bill and I'll have more to say at that time.

There are some contentious issues with respect to some of the recommendations into this particular situation in terms of the threshold for there to be a change in the electoral system and the methodology to get there. We know that they had an election process in British Columbia in their last election and it didn't reach the threshold and there were a lot of comments about how that was done. Perhaps it could have been done in a different way.

I think that's obviously a good way to look at other jurisdictions in terms of what they're trying to accomplish in terms of looking at the existing system of first past the post—in other words, the voters vote for a particular candidate from a particular party or, if they're independent, the person who gets the most votes is the winner and that's who your elected representative is—versus proportional representation, where you have a system where there are elected members who are first past the post, but they are also based on the percentage of the vote; there's a more equal number of members from each of the parties, based on their percentage of the vote. That's the challenge that you have. You have other jurisdictions that have that approach. In such countries as Slovenia and Italy, that's the approach that they go with.

This is an area that is highly contentious. There are pros and cons on both sides, and critics on both sides too.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I just have a couple of questions to the member from Ottawa Centre in regard to his deliberations tonight.

First of all is the whole issue of what it is going to take for a referendum to be able to pass, as far as percentages go. In the legislation, we're putting it at 60%. We're saying only if there's a 60% majority based on another formula of people from various regions etc. You set the

bar so high that it makes it fairly difficult to get any kind of buy-in in order to make this happen.

It seems to me that the basic tenet of democracy is that 50% plus one normally buys you anything. For example, Newfoundland joined the Confederation of Canada based on 50% plus one. If we had said 60%, Newfoundland would still be outside of Confederation and we'd still be trying to fight to get it in. Even in the federal law, we've basically said that if a province wants to secede and become its own independent country, such as was the case with Quebec, it's 50% plus one to get out. How can you have a threshold so great in order to change the electoral system, at 60%, when we accept 50% in most other things that we do when it comes to making decisions?

Referendums are not a new thing to Canada. Referendums have been used at the municipal level on a number of occasions for everything from fluoridation to deciding what kind of electoral system you want in your own municipality. In all those cases, it's been 50%. Municipalities have chosen, for example, to amalgamate. I come from the city of Timmins. It amalgamated Schumacher, South Porcupine, Porcupine, Whitney and Mountjoy into the city of Timmins. It was a 50%-plus-one vote that decided that outcome some 30-odd years ago. I fail to see why it is that we need to have 60% plus a whole bunch of other hoops that we have to jump through in order to decide if we're going to change electoral systems. It seems to me that if it worked for Confederation, it certainly can work to change our electoral system.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to share with the member from Ottawa Centre my comments to him about what he has briefly given us as a snapshot of the process, and the information that he has offered us as well.

There's one piece that I think is important, and I know he'd like to make a comment on this, because he desperately likes the idea of student engagement. Just as a reminder for the people out there, we haven't talked an awful lot about this, but I will tell you how impressed I was with the student assembly and the fact that our students, as young as 14 years old, participated in the very same process—almost mirrored—which gave them an opportunity to give us their response.

I was very proud of the fact that one of my own constituents was chosen. I happen to know the family and I know the young girl, Ms. Poremba. She was the youngest. She was the 14-year-old I referenced earlier: a bright, bright young lady who actually engaged in a conversation with me before she accepted. She wanted to make sure that she wasn't wasting her time. Quite frankly, I assured her she wasn't. Her parents: the same thing. After the fact, they came and talked to me to give me an outline personally of what they did. She indeed said very clearly to me that it was one of the most engaging exercises she's been involved in in her whole life: at 14 years old to be asked to participate in such a heady topic as democratic renewal, and for her to be engaged the entire time and come back afterwards and say, "Do you know what, Mr. Levac? It was not a waste

of time.” She met great people, made great friendships in a very, very engaging conversation. She told me that she learned so much during that process that it has engaged her to participate in politics. For a 14-year-old, you might say that’s no big deal, but boy, I tell you, to be motivated to be a participant in the political process because of what’s happened is a milestone for us, so I congratulate everyone for bringing us through that exercise.

1900

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I’m pleased to add some comments on Bill 155 and the speech from the member for Ottawa Centre. I’m just picking up on what the last speaker noted about the student assembly. I too had the privilege of going to the student assembly and being there for an evening, and a couple of students from Parry Sound–Muskoka participated. It was worthwhile, although I would question how much the whole exercise cost. This government often seems to forget about the dollars and cents, that part of the equation.

The member for Ottawa Centre was talking about the threshold in Bill 155, and the select committee on electoral reform of which I was a part. That select committee, of which a majority of the members were Liberal government members, recommended a 50%-plus-one threshold, so it’s interesting that the government didn’t follow the advice of the committee but instead has set a 60% threshold.

On the select committee on electoral reform, the member for Lanark–Carleton and myself produced a minority report and in it noted that public cynicism and distrust of the political system have more to do with what elected officials do once elected, and that relates very much to doing what you say you’re going to do when you’re running in the campaign—in other words, keeping your election promises. So it’s no surprise that there’s a little cynicism out there. We’ve looked at all of the broken process in recent years.

We need to improve the parliamentary system, keep our campaign promises, respect the role of individual MPPs, fix the lack of productivity here in the Legislature, improve decorum in the Legislature, those sorts of things, to improve the system that we have at this time.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I’ll return to the member for Ottawa Centre for his reply.

Mr. Patten: Let me thank the member for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford for his comments, which I thought were fair in examining the nature of what the bill proposes to do.

The member for Timmins–James Bay repeats his concern about the threshold. I just want to point out one thing, and that is that the threshold is to try to provide some balance between the different regions of Ontario, as I think you know, and that is a 51% requirement; it’s not 60%.

To my friend from Brant, who I know as a former schoolteacher has an eminent love of education and a passion for teaching and seeing young people grow and

develop, I commend him and also the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka for identifying the student assembly which the government helped to set up. It is extremely important, because as you know we lack somewhat the strength of some of our brother and sister nations that have far stronger civic programs; in other words, a knowledge of how our particular governments at various levels work. I think the two members here demonstrated that, and I would certainly support that. I think that’s something we have to pay amends to.

By the way, I would just point out an additional one for my friend from Timmins, that the European Union used the Clarity Act, which requires a significant passage, and they interpret that to mean 55%. They used that as their particular basis for a referendum in Montenegro, in terms of them becoming independent. I found that to be of interest.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tascona: I’m pleased to join in the debate on Bill 155, the Electoral System Referendum Act, 2006. There’s been a lot of debate on this in terms of, like I said, the pros and cons. There are certainly some very fixed positions in terms of where we should be going with respect to our electoral system, not only in terms of how we elect members to this Legislature but also the number of members we have in this Legislature. I’m prepared to talk on the former.

It’s interesting that there was an article in the Toronto Star this weekend written by Robert Benzie. It has to do with this particular bill. The title of the article was, “On This Issue, McGuinty Takes a Pass; Opposition Leaders Angry that Premier Won’t Take a Position on Electoral Reform.” In the article it says:

“After opening the Pandora’s box of democratic reform during the last election campaign, Premier Dalton McGuinty now says the Liberals will remain neutral in the expected October 10 referendum on the issue.

“McGuinty—who created the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform, which is poised to recommend Ontarians adopt a form of proportional representation—says his party will sit out the controversial vote.

“I don’t think this is the kind of thing that should be led by the government,” the Premier says. “It should be the kind of thing that should be led by the people of Ontario.

“‘I’ll live with any arrangement chosen by the people I work for,’ he says. ‘In the coolness and dryness of time, I think Ontarians will be able to properly consider any alternative that’s put forward and weigh that against the status quo.’

“But critics on both sides of the electoral reform debate accuse McGuinty of copping out because he got this ball rolling four years ago.

“On Sunday, the assembly of 103 randomly selected citizens said it thinks a German-style ‘mixed member proportional’ representation system is the best alternative to the current ‘first past the post’ way of electing MPPs.

“A week tomorrow, the panel is expected to officially recommend that the new system be put to a referendum

as part of the October 10 provincial election.” Now, a week tomorrow is going to be April 14, which will be this coming Saturday. “It would have to pass with a 60% ‘super majority’ to become law in time for the 2011 election. But in the event of a minority government this fall, it could even be adopted as early as next year.

“Under the new system, voters would cast two ballots, the first for one of 90 local representatives, the other for the party of their choice. That second ballot would be used to allocate an additional 39 seats in the Legislature from party lists based on the popular vote tally.” That would bring the Legislature up to 129 members from where it is right now, which is 103 members.

“Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory, who is leaning toward the status quo, or the No side of the referendum campaign, blasts McGuinty for trying to straddle the fence.

“While Tory is awaiting the assembly’s final report before announcing his party’s stance, he predicts there will be little public appetite to increase the size of the Legislature from 107 MPPs after the October 11 election to 129 members in the next one.

“Warning there could be other contentious consequences stemming from a shift to a mixed-member system, Tory is incredulous that McGuinty will remain on the sidelines.

“This is the man who felt it was such an important matter for Ontario that obviously he must have thought change was needed. Why else would he have convened this assembly?” Tory asks.

“Why else would he have chosen to make this virtually his only election promise that he’s actually kept?

“For him now to say he’s the ... great Mr. Neutral is unreal. I can’t imagine, on something that’s going to be put to the people, we (in the PC Party) won’t have a position.” End of quote from John Tory in this article by Robert Benzie of the Star.

“In 2003, the Liberals’ campaign literature quoted journalist Jeffrey Simpson’s book, *The Friendly Dictatorship*, which maintained the first past the post system increases ‘cynicism about government.’

1910

“The only way to reverse this trend is through engaging citizens in an open and honest debate about our democracy,” the Liberal Party vowed, in one of its 150 election promises. “After consulting with the public, we will hold a referendum on whether we should keep our winner-take-all voting system or replace it with another.

“Alternatives to our voting system could include some form of proportional representation, preferential ballots or mixed systems.”

“NDP leader Howard Hampton, a long-time proportional representation backer, says the Liberals were being cynical.

“We’ve never felt that either the Premier or the members of the McGuinty government were really interested in electoral reform,” Hampton says.

“They were interested in talking about it, but we’ve never felt they were really interested in doing anything about that.”

“Hampton emphasizes that his party will be campaigning actively for the Yes forces.

“We’re going to be quite front and centre in advocating. For us, this is not a frill issue,” he says.

“Under a mixed member proportional representation system, the outcome of the 2003 provincial election would have been far different.

“In that election, the Liberals won 69.9% of the seats—or 72 of the 103 in the Legislature—with just 46.6% of the popular vote.

“But the Tories’ 34.6% of the vote translated into only 23.3%—or 24—of the seats. Similarly, the NDP won 14.7% of the vote, but took just seven, or 6.8%, of the seats.

“Although it is difficult to calculate the results of a similar vote tally in a mixed system, it’s likely the Liberals would have had about 64 seats in a 129-member House. The Tories would have had 46 seats, and the New Democrats 17.

“In a proportional representation system,” Hampton says, “the electoral results tend to more closely align with what voters vote for.”

That was an article about this particular system, because we’re very close to the decision and recommendation of the citizens’ assembly, which could occur and should occur this Saturday, which is April 14.

It’s certainly interesting to look at the vote results. If you were a political scientist looking at the Liberal vote, obviously you could say that based on the vote they had in the last election, which was 46.6% of the popular vote—and they ended up with 72 of 103 seats in the Legislature, which is 69.9% of the seats—one could say that their vote was very productive in terms of their being very good at getting the vote that would translate into seats for them.

Conversely, the same could not be said for the Tories and the NDP in terms of what they came up with, which was 31 seats, and they had close to 49.3% of the vote. So they had 49.3% of the vote, and that translated into 31 seats. You can see why you have people saying there’s something wrong with this system when almost 50% of the vote, which went to two parties, only resulted in 31% of the seats. And that’s where the argument comes out in terms of why we should have a change.

Now, there are some interesting comments with respect to the referendum. If the recommendation as put forward is what we think it’s going to be, the German model of mixed member representation, you’ll have 90 members elected first past the post and the remaining 39 distributed based on the percentages of the vote. The easiest way of looking at it would be to say, if each party got 33% of the vote, then the remaining 39 seats would be distributed equally among them in that regard. You would have 13 seats going to each of the parties based on the proportional representation model, which some people

would say is fair, because if they got 33% of the vote, they should get 33% of the seats.

The process, when they have the vote, is going to be run this way. There's going to be a ballot question, which is going to be prepared by the Lieutenant Governor's office, in terms of what the voting question will be. Whether that referendum is going to be binding or not will depend on whether the threshold is met in the exercise, and the threshold is 60%. There are some comments with respect to how that's been viewed by a number of individuals. I'm looking for the quote here by David Docherty, who is a political science professor at Wilfrid Laurier University, on October 25, 2006, in the *St. Catharines Standard* on the 60% threshold. The argument there is that if 60% or more of the population vote for a change in the system—in other words, they say, "Are you in favour of the mixed representation model as opposed to the first past the post?" and 60% of the population that votes says they're in favour—then the government is obligated to implement that particular system. We'll deal with that later, but here's what he says: "Those bloody idiots. For the life of me, I don't understand why a government sets a higher bar for electoral reform than they do to have themselves elected to office. Why is it that you could get elected to office with a majority government with 38%, but to change the electoral system you need two thirds? It doesn't make sense."

What he's referring to when he talks about 38% is the Bob Rae government of 1990 to 1995, the NDP. They had 38% of the vote and a comfortable majority in the Legislature at that time.

There's another quote here by Fair Vote Canada executive director, Larry Gordon, October 24, 2006: "Fair Vote Ontario called today's Ontario government announcement of a 60% electoral reform referendum threshold an 'undemocratic roadblock to democratic reform.' ... Fair Vote Ontario is calling on the McGuinty government to follow the example of former New Brunswick Premier Bernard Lord who had pledged to hold an electoral reform referendum and accept a 50%-plus-one majority decision because, as he put it, that is 'the traditional number for democratic decisions.'"

That is the major point with respect to whether there is going to be electoral reform. So in the referendum, you're going to have a ballot question, which I would expect to be fairly understandable and something that the public can deal with in terms of casting their ballot in a knowledgeable way.

There are some comments with respect to the way the bill works:

"The result of the referendum is binding if the recommended electoral system is selected in,

"(a) at least 60% of all the valid referendum ballots cast; and

"(b) more than 50% of the valid referendum ballots cast in each of at least 64 electoral districts."

The legislation states that the government in place after the 2007 election shall introduce legislation to adopt

the recommended system on or before December 31, 2008. So that's a mandatory requirement on the government that's elected in the fall of 2007, which is October 10, 2007, the election date for this year.

The new act provides that, "The Election Act applies to the referendum with necessary modifications...as if the referendum were a general election." It also sets out detailed special rules for the application of the Election Act to the referendum. "There will be a separate referendum ballot, and referendum ballots will be counted separately, after the election ballots have been counted. Registered referendum campaign organizers will be entitled to appoint scrutineers whose functions are limited to the referendum. Persons who act as referendum scrutineers may not also act as election scrutineers." Provision is made for regulations governing the referendum.

One would expect that when we're dealing with this—and maybe I'm a little off topic, but I don't think it really is—the ballots that are being filled out are of a different colour so that people would know exactly—you know, you can get into these elections and the ballots could be crossing all over the place. You would hope that an election ballot would not end up in the referendum ballots, as the number of ballots becomes determinative of that election. I think they're going to have to be very careful in terms of what they do when they're dealing with the scrutineers and the ballots that are going to be cast, because I think it's going to be challenging enough to conduct yourself with respect to the election as opposed to dealing with a referendum in terms of the workload you're going to have to deal with, and any question of what has been filled out and whether the people know what the real issue is or whether they even care in terms of that particular process.

1920

If we're going into a general election, it's going to be interesting how this is going to be promoted and communicated to the public. You can say, "Okay, you're going to be electing your new government, but you're also going to be voting in a referendum to determine how the electoral process works in the future." It's going to be an interesting time. It's going to be a challenge for this to work, not only from a communications standpoint but also from a practical standpoint in terms of how those ballots are going to be produced, how those ballots are going to be counted and how this result will be interpreted by the government of the day.

It's going to be an interesting time in terms of this next election. Today is April 10, which would mean that today we're six months away from the next provincial election. That's not a very long time. I know my good friend Mario Sergio from York West is contemplating that right now—or maybe he's doing something else; I don't know. I thought he was contemplating that. Maybe he's thinking about Italian day.

We're going to be having an Italian day here at the Legislature on June 2. I know he's working hard on the preparations for that, and I'm looking forward to coming to that. It's going to be on a Saturday here at the

Legislature. It would be nice if you got a big tent on the legislative grounds, if you could do that, but we'll leave that in your capable hands, under Minister Colle.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): You can't sleep in it, though.

Mr. Tascona: No. The tent is to eat in; it's not to sleep in. I'm talking about a canopy tent. That's an event that's forthcoming.

This particular bill is something that academics love. I imagine that a lot of books are going to be written on this particular election, in terms of what the results were. I think it's probably going to be the subject of a lot of political science classes—I'm a graduate of politics at McMaster University. It's going to be a huge challenge.

Interjection.

Mr. Tascona: What was that, member from Essex?

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): Is that what's wrong with you?

Mr. Tascona: Well, the Premier went to McMaster. It can't be that bad a school. I think Bob Nixon went to McMaster too—some of your colleagues.

Mr. Crozier: No, it's political science—

Mr. Tascona: Oh yeah, political science; okay.

I think this is going to be a great issue in terms of analyzing, but if it's lost—I'm not really clear on the legislation; maybe the member from Ottawa Centre, who is going to respond to this, is. If it is lost, will it come up again in the next election? In terms of this particular issue, is there going to be one shot at it? And if it doesn't happen, what happens? If it is successful, what happens in terms of a review of the process to see whether it actually works? If it's not working, how do you change it and bring it back to the first past the post system or to some other system? I think it's important that we deal with those particular issues as we go through this exercise.

I've been very pleased to speak on this. This is certainly historic legislation. I guess time will tell whether it's meaningful or not, in terms of how we change the approach to the electoral system in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bisson: I enjoyed the presentation given. I think he tried to lay out exactly what the issue is. Simply put, I think there's an argument to be made, and I think the member made the argument fairly well: We've seen over the years that election night has not necessarily given the result that voters have asked for. We've had very few times in the history of Ontario—I think it's maybe only twice, and maybe my good friend and colleague Mr. Prue, the member for Beaches–East York, might want to comment on this—where the percentage of the vote represented what the party actually got in the Legislature. In fact, very few times have clear majority governments been voted in. I think it has only happened a couple of times where a political party got more than 50% of the vote in a general election.

I guess the thing we have to ask ourselves is, is the current system working as well as it needs to? Probably not, I would argue. I think we only have to take a look at this Legislature and watch some of the debates to find out

to what degree it could sometimes be made a heck of a lot better as far as having true participation in the Legislature and being able to amend what is before the House or before a committee. It seems to me that the test of any legislation should be, is the legislation supported by a majority of members freely elected in a PR system? I think that would be a much better test.

For example, when Mr. Harris tried to do the amalgamation of the city of Toronto and others, if you had a PR system, the government of the day, in that case Mr. Harris, would not have had a clear majority and he would have had to get the support of some members of the opposition in order to pass that particular initiative. If the legislation couldn't stand the test of this Legislature by way of a vote by each member based on the composition of the House under PR, my guess is that that legislation would have never gone through, and that would probably have more closely reflected what the will of the people was.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I'm pleased to join in the debate on Bill 155, on democratic renewal. I would like to focus on something the member for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford didn't focus on, which is that the glass is half full. I was reminded of that when I received a letter from Mr. Peter MacLeod, of the students' assembly secretariat—I just received the letter quite recently. He spoke about the enthusiasm and interest that our Ontario Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform demonstrated, in their ability to evaluate the six different voting systems they were asked to learn about, and their participation. I know that a lot of members in this House were able to meet their student assembly member. I think that we in this House forget—sometimes we think this is the centre of the universe, and it isn't. There are a lot of young people out there who are engaged and enthusiastic. They want to participate, and this was an opportunity for them to participate.

Not only was the students' assembly secretariat involved, but we also had about 2,500 students in classrooms across Ontario participating. They came back with a number of different models. From an accuracy point of view, I would just like to—when the member for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford talked about the decision that the citizens' assembly is going to make, they actually vote on Sunday, April 15, so we'll know what their decision is on that day, but the official report isn't until May 15, so we're going to be waiting until the 15th to know what the citizens' assembly recommendation is.

The students' assembly actually recommended a mixed member proportional system, and I think they struggled with that—it's clear from the information they sent us. But more importantly, they thanked us for the opportunity to be engaged, to participate. This is a system they're going to inherit. There's nothing more important than having it be a democratic system.

1930

Mr. Miller: I'm pleased to respond to the speech on Bill 155 by the member from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford. Bill 155 is the bill that will determine the threshold for

the referendum that will occur next October 10 on the work of the citizens' assembly, which has been meeting for many months, looking at how MPPs are elected to this place. I would ask the government members, how serious is the government taking this whole process when they've set the threshold at 60% when their own select committee on electoral reform recommended a 50%-plus-one threshold?

Responding to the member from Brampton Centre about the students' assembly and the need to get students involved, I completely agree with that. That's part of the reason I always take the opportunity to get out to high schools or public schools and talk about what it's like around this place. In fact, last week I was at Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School to meet with the students of the civics class there.

In terms of the choice people will be voting on on October 10, it's looking very much, according to the news articles, like it will be a mixed member proportional system. I guess, from the early reports, that the number of geographic representatives would go from the current 103 down to 90. That's one of the aspects of the recommendation that I certainly have a big problem with, as I represent the area of Parry Sound-Muskoka, which is a huge geographic area to begin with. To give you an example, for me to go from my home to Dokis First Nation is three and a half hours one way. By reducing the number of geographic MPPs, you'll make the northern ridings and other ridings even bigger. That is problematic based on the huge geography our province.

Mr. Prue: It was a pleasure to listen to the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, my seatmate, the man who sits beside me here.

Mr. Levac: A different party.

Mr. Prue: A different party. Absolutely.

He did make two comments, though, that I think he should clear up. First, he said that the referendum question itself would be from the Lieutenant Governor's office. I think he meant to say the Lieutenant Governor in Council, i.e., the cabinet, because it is not, after all, the Lieutenant Governor who is going to make the decision on what the referendum question is; it will be done in private by the cabinet without any say by this Legislature—and I will be dealing with that in my own opportunity in a few minutes.

Secondly, he had a question: What will happen in terms of this referendum? Will it be a one-shot deal, or can we expect it to go on and on and possibly rear its head in future Parliaments? I think that's very instructive. One need only look at what has happened in British Columbia, where the threshold was set too high. In British Columbia, where it was set at 60%—the first place to do so; Prince Edward Island followed suit soon thereafter and now Ontario—they were surprised on election night to see that 58% of the citizens of that province wanted to see electoral change as the citizen members had decided; it was an STV system. But the instructive thing there was that because it was only 58%, it did not pass. What the province of British Columbia

has been forced to do is hold another referendum because they were in limbo. They had a clear majority of the citizens—58% to 42%—wanting electoral change, and yet they had adopted a system that did not allow for it.

So in the next election—a municipal election this time—there is going to be another ballot and another referendum, and the cycle goes on. For my friend, that's exactly what's going to happen as a result of this.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Tascona: I'm very pleased to respond to the comments of my colleagues from Timmins-James Bay, Brampton Centre, Parry Sound-Muskoka and Beaches-East York. As usual, my friend from Beaches-East York is correct: It's the Lieutenant Governor in Council, in that regard, and we'll correct the Hansard and make sure that's in there.

He raises the issue of where we go if it's not accepted. Certainly if there's a clear question and everybody understands what it is—you know, it's difficult, because the bottom line is that we do have a system, first past the post; especially if it becomes ideological, it can be very problematic for the member who is here, the MPP, and what they're trying to do to become not only relevant here but also responsive to their constituents' needs. I think that's the biggest challenge in terms what the public wants from their members. They want their members to represent them and their interests. It's far more important to them than how the parties carve up the pie in terms of the number of seats they have in the House.

Getting back to what the real point is, speaking to the member from Brampton Centre in terms of the students' involvement—and I think that's important and obviously they're the key and they're the future of where we're going—I think their enthusiasm certainly is needed in the process and has been there, but at the end of the day we have to make the role of the MPP meaningful and relevant, and it has to be something that we're proud of in terms of the electoral system we have.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: It is a pleasure to stand and have my one-hour leadoff, thanks to the House the other night. Thank you for the unanimous consent to put it off, because it is very difficult to be in the chair and to give a speech on this topic at all.

But here I am tonight and I plan to use most of the time, so those of you who want to go out and take a little walk, I guess you can do so, but I hope to raise what I think are the faults of this bill, not necessarily the benefits of other electoral systems, as other speakers have talked about, but the faults with this particular bill. I find that there's three. There are only three in this entire bill that are, I think, wrongly put.

The first one is the question. The question that is going to form the ballot is not decided by the people who are discussing electoral change. In the province of British Columbia they left the decision of the question to the citizen framers, who came up with it, and then that question which was proposed by them was taken to the

cabinet. The cabinet, in turn, vetted it in the Legislature. There was all-party agreement in the Legislature and the question appeared on the ballot. That is very different from what is being done here, and I'm going to deal with that later.

The second problem I see is the decision on the threshold. As has already been discussed by other speakers, this government has determined that the threshold will be set higher than any other threshold in the history of this country and any other threshold in the history of this province. In the country it is equivalent to the thresholds recently established in British Columbia and latterly in Prince Edward Island, but these are the first two that ever set thresholds above 50%. These are the first two jurisdictions to toy with this idea, and in the case of British Columbia at least, it came with what can only be construed as disastrous consequences when the threshold was not met but a clear majority obviously opted for change. I'm going to discuss that as well.

The third problem with this bill is that the regulations that are going to be made in terms of the referendum are going to be made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. That's a fancy way of saying the cabinet. None of those regulations are going to be debated in this Legislature, none of them are going to be open to public scrutiny and many of them are absolutely important to the smooth running of any referendum. Just a short list of the things that are going to be decided inside a cabinet room without any kind of vetting of this Legislature, of the backbench Liberal members, of the opposition members, includes such important things as that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations dealing with the campaign, the campaign time, the campaign finances, the registration of the pro and con people who are lining up on both sides of the issue, the contributions that may or may not be made, who may make them, the limits to the contributions, how much money can be spent by each side, the spending limits and, last but not least, the entire governance of advertising: who may advertise, who may not and what in fact they may say within the body of the advertising on their perspective of the legislation.

All of these three factors—these are sections 3, 4 and 19—cause me some considerable difficulty and, I would suggest, cause the majority of people who are seized with this issue a great deal of difficulty.

Now, we get to this position because the Liberals promised in the last election to do something about our electoral system. They promised that if elected they would convene a citizens' assembly, that they would look at our first past the post process and that they would empower ordinary citizens to look to see whether or not we could do it in a better way. I am thankful that this is one of the promises that the Liberals actually kept. They went ahead and appointed 103 citizens—one from each riding across this province—to make recommendations.

1940

There was a caveat. You could not have been a past member of this Legislature and you could not have been running. You had to be over the age of 18. You had to be

a citizen and an elector. You had to be on the electoral list. A majority of the citizens who were chosen, 51%, had to be women and 49% had to be men. They found a gentleman, a judge, to be the chair.

I think it wasn't a bad process. Up until that point, I thought it was a good process because actual citizens who were not beholden to any of the political parties, who may belong to any of the three in this House or a party that isn't in the House, or a voter who was not terribly concerned or who had potentially never even cast a ballot—all had an equal opportunity to be chosen.

But what has happened since then is that this government has encumbered those who have given of their time and their expertise over these last six months—who have met every second weekend to learn about the process—with three really bad things, which I've mentioned here: the 60% threshold, the fact the Lieutenant Governor in Council is making all the regulations and the fact that the question that they want to put before the citizens of Ontario as to whether or not their recommendation or recommendations be carried out will not be made by them but will be made by the cabinet in secret session and imposed upon them.

This weekend they're going to make that momentous decision. These 103 rational, intelligent, dedicated Ontarians are going to come out with their conclusion. A great deal has been speculated on what they may or may not be recommending. I think, if the press reports are at all true, that it will be some form of proportional representation that is recommended. They are, though, going to send that recommendation to the Legislature and the Legislature has set up roadblocks which may be impossible for those citizen recommendations to ever become law.

Sitting in the chair and again here tonight, I've listened to what the members of the Legislature have had to say on this issue. I've also seen the newspaper columns on a Premier who does not want to be involved in the issue and of a Leader of the Opposition who has clearly indicated that he is going to oppose what they come up with, in all likelihood, although he did at least say he'd wait until this weekend before he opposes them, as opposed to opposing them right now.

What were these citizens asked to do? These citizens were asked to do something which I think is absolutely vital and fundamental, and something that the select committee had been asked to do earlier by the Ontario Legislature. They were asked to recognize the impacts on the party system of any changes that they might make; the impacts on the functioning of our Parliament of any changes they might make; the impacts on the nature of government as it exists in Ontario of changes they may propose; the impacts on the representation of Ontario society—whether or not people have an opportunity to come here to voice their concerns in the Legislature on behalf of their fellow citizens, whether or not all aspects of our society are properly represented in this Legislature.

I would think it's quite clear to any citizens that we are probably overrepresented by lawyers and under-

represented by farmers and factory workers, because that's the way it is. But they were asked to look at that. They were asked to look at why there are so few women legislators in our province. They were asked to look at ways to have more women and aboriginal people in our Parliament. They were asked to look at ways to increase voter awareness and voter participation and what kind of change of system would accomplish that. They were asked to look at the whole bugaboo of stable government and they were asked to look at the identification of geographic constituencies and the role that those play in voter identification.

It's a very difficult thing to do all of those things and come up with a recommendation. But I have very great confidence that those 103 people, properly instructed, will come up with a plan that works as well as or better than the one we have today.

A great many people and members of this Legislature have talked about the system that has served us so well, and indeed it has. The system has worked but is starting to fray around the edges. One has to remember that the first past the post system that we employ here in Ontario is becoming a rarity in the world. It is used in very, very few places left. The only ones are the national elections of England and Canada. That's it. That's the only two first past the post.

Mr. Bisson: What about India?

Mr. Prue: Not even India.

Mr. Bisson: When did they change?

Mr. Prue: They've changed, too. These are the only two places left in the democratic world that still use this system. Even when the Americans go out to vote for a President, they don't vote for the President. They vote for the electoral college. The electoral college, in turn, votes for the President. That's where you can see what happened in the George Bush election, where he was elected by the hanging chads in Florida. It was because he won the state of Florida; therefore, he won the electoral college votes. Even though his opponent got more votes across the country than he did, George Bush became President of the United States by a rather arcane system, worked out by them some 200 years ago for multi-party democracy, which quite frankly doesn't work so well in a modern society. They are loath to change that system. And I think in this country and in this province many people are loath to change a system that works for them but doesn't necessarily work for the public at large.

The whole issue of 60% is the big one, and that's the one that needs to be addressed and discussed. The Canadian experience has been 50% plus one. My colleague from Timmins—James Bay mentioned the two best examples. The first one was 1949, when Newfoundland decided on its second or third ballot—not its first time but its second or third ballot—to join Confederation. They joined Confederation with but 51% of the vote. Forty-nine per cent said no, but 51% said yes, and I am thankful as a Canadian every day that the province of Newfoundland and the good people of that colony determined that their best interests were in Canada as

opposed to going it alone or remaining as a colony of Great Britain. There was a third option, another option, to join the United States of America, which was fervently debated at that time, but they chose by 51% to join Canada. If we had thrown up the roadblock in Canada in 1949 and said, "You need 60%," I think the Newfoundlanders today would be Americans. That's exactly what would have happened. If they had thrown up a roadblock, and there was no necessity—the people of Newfoundland accepted 51% because they knew a majority of them had decided that way.

The other experience we all know is the Quebec experience. In Quebec, 50% plus one is considered to be a majority in any referendum. I held my breath along with every single Canadian, every single person who wants to hold this country together—

M. Bisson: Je me souviens.

Mr. Prue: Yes, we remember that night. I remember that night darkly, watching the "yes" votes go and go and go and then pile up until we got into Montreal and saw that decline until the "no" forces actually won by a very small percentage.

But the democratic principle was a good one—the question wasn't, and I'm going to deal with that in a minute—that the majority must decide. The problem with the Quebec referendum, of course, was that the question was immensely fuzzy. It looked to me, reading it from Ontario in both English and French, that they were just seeking authority to have a better negotiation with Canada. I think that's really what caused that.

So I welcomed the Clarity Act in terms of setting a clear question, but the principle of 50% plus one is alive and well in Quebec, and it should be alive and well everywhere. Where the majority decides, the majority should carry.

In Ontario we have never put great questions like this, except in the Charlottetown accord. The Charlottetown accord had very strange and arcane rules too, but it did require that all of the provinces come on board. There had to be a 50% rule. There were just so many rules that it was quite literally impossible for it to pass.

1950

But in Ontario, where we have had referenda, we have had precisely five of them, and all of them involved liquor. That was the big thing in Ontario. The first referendum whether or not to allow liquor to be sold was in 1894. The decision of Ontarians was to ban liquor, except that Ontario could not determine whether it was international trade or whether it could cross borders, either from one province to another or from the United States, and the courts threw it down. In 1902, Ontario tried again, with a very small change to it, saying "within the borders of Ontario," and that never became law, although a majority voted for that—slightly over 50%. They did it again in 1919, they did it again in 1921, and in 1924, they did it again, and every single plebiscite, every single one, involved liquor. And that's the entire history of referenda in this province.

Municipalities, though, have conducted a great many referendums about everything from the fluoride in our water to amalgamations, as my friend from Timmins—James Bay talked about. But quite sadly, this Parliament and this government have not seen fit to honour a democratic referendum conducted in this province during the mandate of this government.

You will remember, going back a couple of years ago, there was a ballot question in the city of Kawartha Lakes. You will remember that it was a sanctioned ballot that had the agreement of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who was a Conservative when it was sanctioned. It had all-party approval in the Legislature. It had the agreement of all three parties that if the people of the new city of Kawartha Lakes voted to deamalgamate, it would be honoured.

That did not happen. A majority—more than 50% plus one; I believe it was up around 51% or 52%—voted to deamalgamate, and this government, in its wisdom, said, “We don’t care what you did. We don’t care how you voted. There are new rules, because we don’t like the results of this referendum.” To this day, the people of that city are forced into an amalgamation that many of them do not want. They feel quite betrayed that the democratic principles of this province were let down by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and by the government led by Dalton McGuinty, because the people had spoken and the rules were clearly understood.

This is what causes me a great problem with the 60% rule, because the attempt is made to do the same thing. It’s to make sure that the threshold is not met, so that the government quite literally can walk away. It portends an action today with such a high ceiling that it is really quite impossible.

I have already alluded to, in my two-minute discussion—as has the member for Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford—what has happened in British Columbia. They have been forced back into a referendum situation with an identical question held at the next municipal election in order to try to get around the stalemate. They cannot and will not leave 58% hanging out there, and I think they probably rue the day that they came up with the 60%.

But why did they come up with that? The all-party select committee went to British Columbia and met with the Premier, with some of the citizen representatives and with the Premier-appointed chair and asked, “How did the 60% come into being? What made you choose this high threshold?” The answers we got, not from the Premier but from everyone else, were quite telling. They were that the 60% threshold was chosen to ensure that it would fail. It would fail because quite literally it is impossible to get that kind of consensus on a Yes or No question in this country. It has proven to be quite difficult in terms of Meech Lake, in terms of Charlottetown. It is literally impossible in the party systems that we have in this province. Nobody has got 60% in any province or in the federal government in any election, I don’t believe, since the time of Confederation. In fact, 1937—mark that on your calendar—was the last election in Ontario where

the majority government actually got a majority of the votes; 1937 was the last time somebody got 50% or more than 50% of the votes and formed a majority government. Every majority government in the province for the last 70 years has been elected with a minority of the votes.

I asked the question—because we had committee hearings on this—of a BC expert: what effect the government’s setting the 60% would have upon our good citizens, the 103 of them who are deliberating right up until this weekend, and secondly, what effect it would have upon the citizens who are going to have to go out and vote. He was quite chilling in what he had to say. Bear with me, Mr. Speaker. It’s about a quarter of a page long, what he said on these two issues. But really what he said in a nutshell was that the setting of the 60% is going to destroy the credibility of the process for those who are involved in it and laterally for those who will vote in it. The name of the expert is Dr. Dennis Pilon, political science department, University of Victoria, British Columbia. I have the actual transcript that he sent. He was on television and got cut off. He sent in this transcript for the last part of the question, and I quote it in its entirety:

“Of course, I don’t know if they are cynical or not”—this is about the 103 people who we have chosen—“though I have heard as they were surprised and displeased with the supermajority rule. More generally, the reports I’ve had from Ontario and in my discussion with BC members of their assembly, members are just the opposite of cynical. A key part of their commitment is their sense that what they are doing is not a waste of time. Obviously, rules that mar the process, like the supermajority rule, detract from that sense that they have been given a real rather than a phony mandate. Given that the government has yet to produce a compelling argument for their decision, I can’t help but think that this will affect morale, particularly if we end up with a BC situation where more than a majority but less than 60% have endorsed change.

“Extending this question to the public at large, I think they too are not cynical about their democracy and its potential, though they are somewhat cynical about politicians and parties. And that is another reason why this supermajority rule is so damaging. It takes what could be a confidence builder in our system, an opportunity to rebuild public trust in our institutions, as well as politicians and parties, and instead raises doubts about why certain rules are being used and to what end. The committee should understand that there is room to build public trust in our institutions and parties. Recent work by the IRPP suggests that while the public are critical of parties, an overwhelming majority are prepared to affirm that they believe parties are essential to a functioning democracy. Thus what the committee recommends and the government does on this supermajority rule could have real effects.” That was the expert from British Columbia, Dr. Dennis Pilon.

The committee heard from a great many people during the deliberations on these recommendations on the

Electoral System Reform Act. I'll just give a synopsis—and I thank the staff for preparing this synopsis; they prepare one for everybody who comes forward—of what they had to say.

Fair Vote Ontario, as you can imagine, did not like that the 50% plus one—they said, “The will of the people in the referendum should be measured with a 50%-plus-one threshold. Consequently, there should be no provisions or extra conditions that allow a minority to veto electoral reform,” and they go on.

A second group was Equal Voice, trying desperately to get more women involved in politics. They had this to say: “The threshold in section 4 is a stumbling block to electoral reform in Ontario. It is foreign to normal democratic standards, and raises the fear that the opportunity for fairer representation of women and minorities will be lost. The section should be amended to require a simple majority vote for approval of whatever new voting model the Ontario citizens' assembly recommends.”

We go on. Dr. Pilon—I have already quoted him, but here is what he had to say on this: “Historically and comparatively, other than the recent BC and PEI referendums, there are no precedents for supermajority rules as applied to voting systems, except where the voting system is entrenched in the Constitution. The threshold in section 4 should be replaced with 50% plus one, period. It is normatively indefensible to privilege one side, as section 4 presently does.”

2000

We have Mr. Smith: “The threshold should not refer to ridings. Rather, there should be one calculation only of the total number of eligible votes, with a threshold of a simple majority.”

We have—let me see; there are just so many of them. Literally, almost every single person who came forward had this to say about the threshold. We had Messrs. Shaul, Deverell, Rosenthal, and we had the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, who advocate for 50% plus one.

But I'd also like to read what the Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform had to say because this has been the topic of so many people here, what a good job the students do. This is what the students had to say about your 60% rule: “The Legislature should conduct a review with the objective of arriving at a just and democratic value for an appropriate threshold. As part of this review, it should examine the viability of a threshold of 50% plus one, with support in at least 54 ridings—that is, a democratic majority standard which would accurately reflect the opinions of the province. The Legislature should further consider not only the implications of requiring a ‘supermajority,’ but also the outcome if a change were to be rejected despite having received support from more than 50% of the province.”

People went on to talk about how it will require three votes in favour for every two votes opposed in order for the system to be changed. There's nowhere else I'm aware of that a majority requires three votes to undo two votes. I don't know where this came from, but this is the

system you've come up with: If there are five people in a room, three of them have to be on one side; if there are 10 people in the room, you have to have six, not five and five. You do the math. It just doesn't work. That's what they had to say.

Quite frankly, I think what the government has done here is scuttle any chance of democratic reform in this province. I will be very surprised on election night, October 10, to see that 60% of the population is united behind whatever the citizens are going to recommend. It is too high a threshold. Having lived through Meech Lake, having lived through the Charlottetown accord—and I was one of the people organizing in my riding for the Yes side; I thought Charlottetown was a good thing that would help to keep the country united. And although we won in my riding and although we won in Ontario, we lost most of the provinces and did not ever see it come to bear. To remember, to put it into historical perspective, it was after Charlottetown was lost that the referendum in Quebec came dangerously close to breaking up our country. So I will be surprised.

I think I've spoken enough about the 60%. I know the government won't reconsider it, because the question of the referendum was first of all put to the select committee. You will remember the select committee. Not only did they travel around the province and go to British Columbia, they also went to look at systems in other parts of the world, including Germany, Scotland and Ireland, to see how their systems worked and what the good things were and what the pitfalls were.

The select committee, which recommended 50% plus one—I want to underline this. The select committee of all parties, who recommended 50% plus one, included the following members: its chair, now a cabinet minister, was Caroline Di Cocco. You'll have to pardon me, Mr. Speaker; I have to read the names rather than the ridings, because they were on the select committee. The vice-chair was Norm Miller, from Parry Sound-Muskoka. Also on the committee were Wayne Arthurs, my good colleague, who's here tonight; Richard Patten, who spoke here tonight; Monique Smith; Kathleen Wynne, who is now a cabinet minister; Kuldip Kular; myself and Norm Sterling. These members from all parties recommended that 60% plus one not—we didn't even consider that. We voted for 50% plus one, plus a majority in a majority of the ridings to make sure that one section of the province wasn't imposing on another. But the important and fundamental rule there was 50% plus one.

The motion which I made during the committee at the behest of Fair Vote Canada, Equal Voice and others was to reduce it to 50% plus one. The motion itself read that the Lieutenant Governor in Council make the decision on the address of the assembly; that is, that the cabinet report to the assembly on what they were doing and that the assembly concur. That was lost, of course, because the Liberals voted it down.

How BC did it, if it's instructive at all, is that British Columbia allowed the referendum question to be determined by the citizens and approved by the Legislature.

Again, the people who came before us and made deputations on the question itself—not the 60% but how the question was asked—had a great deal to say about this and they were not listened to.

We had only four deputations on this second point, four deputations on the referendum question, section 3, that in order not to jeopardize the credibility and integrity of the reform process, the citizens' assembly should draft the referendum question. That was by Fair Vote Ontario and Mr. Smith, a second deputation. The second one was that the recommendations of the citizens' assembly should serve as the basis for the referendum question. This was by Citizen Rapaport. The third one, by OPSEU and a citizen by the name of Gregory, was that the actual wording of the referendum question should be determined by the Legislature and not left to an order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Last but not least, from a citizen by the name of Lewis: The wording of the referendum question should require the approval of the Legislature, with defined time constraints placed on the debate.

Not one soul who came before the committee thought the Lieutenant Governor in Council—cabinet—should make this decision and set the question themselves.

The questions of referendum are absolutely essential to the outcome of the referendum. One need only look at what happened in Quebec, which became dangerously close to secession from Canada. It was because of the weakness of the question. It was because the question was fuzzy. It's because they had a particular model that they wanted to follow. It's because they wanted to advocate the separation that they made that question so incredibly weak that it could mean many things and confuse the voters. It is what the Parliament of Canada dealt with later on in the Clarity Act: that it had to be a very clear, unambiguous question.

We will have no say in what that question is going to be. The first time we are going to see that question is when it's already decided. It will be decided by a group of some 20 people, without consultation to the elected representatives. That was not done in British Columbia and it was not done in Prince Edward Island, but it is being done in Ontario. I, for the life of me, cannot imagine why you want this in the bill and why you all are supporting it. Do you not have a role? Do the back-benchers in the Liberal Party not have a role, or do you leave everything to cabinet? Do you think that your constituents should not be consulted on the question and that you do not have the wherewithal to make this decision? You presume, by support of this bill, to leave it all to cabinet.

I find this to be rather troubling because most of the members in this House I consider as my colleagues, I consider to be learned and to have things to say that need to be heard. But in passing this legislation, if the majority does so at the end of this debate, that is precisely what is going to happen. The Lieutenant Governor in Council will make it without due regard to the citizens' assembly, the electoral officer, this House or anyone else. The

question may be a good question, but it may not. In the end, it is the question upon which the decision will be made.

The next thing is the binding ballot. This government has said it will be bound by the citizens should there be a 60% vote.

I don't know how this could possibly happen, and no one in the government has yet told me how it is going to happen that this Legislature can bind the next one. It is contrary to all parliamentary principles, because every Parliament is unique in and of itself and every Parliament can make its own rules and its own laws.

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One need only look at what happened in 1995. There was a whole set of NDP laws that I think members of the Conservative Party did not like. One after another, the old laws were struck down and new laws were instituted in their place, and it was the right of that Parliament to do so. The people had voted for a new party, and the new party had a new platform and wanted to institute laws that they felt were part of the mandate that had been given to them. This Legislature cannot bind the next one, although this law purports to do so.

We had two people—one was Mr. Babineau and the other was a Mr. Gregory—who came out to talk about the illegality of it all and how it could not be done. I think it's very clear what the government, in its manoeuvring, is attempting to do here. All the bill says—I invite any of you to read it. It doesn't say that the next Parliament will pass the law; it only encumbers the next Parliament and says "shall introduce legislation."

Anyone who has been around this place very long will know what that involves. That involves someone standing up in the House and introducing a bill. The bill receives first reading and a short explanation is given, and then nothing happens until the government of the day determines that they're going to debate the bill: introduce it for second reading, have a debate and potentially send it off to committee or whatever. All that happens under this bill is that all the next government of Ontario, be it Liberal, Conservative or New Democrat, has to do—the mandate of this Legislature—is introduce the legislation. That's it. Nothing more need be done. Those 103 citizens and those 12 million or 13 million Ontarians who are expecting something of this legislation and a potential change may be in for a very rude surprise, because the legislation does not empower this to happen. Indeed, I would suggest that there is no will for it to happen if you listen to the Premier and to the leader of the official opposition in their mutterings about their support, or lack thereof, for the endeavours of our citizens.

There are more problems with this bill.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: No. This is a really bad bill; it is. Have you never read these provisions? I'm asking my good friend from Brampton Centre if she has ever read this, because this is what it says.

The whole issue of public education: In British Columbia, when we met with the people in Victoria and

Vancouver and asked about what was happening in the run-up to their referendum, to a person, the Premier, the chair, the citizen members, ordinary citizens, newspaper people—everyone we met—said the same thing: The reason the referendum failed was not only the 60% threshold; it was because people did not understand it. The government spent almost no money on public education, either for the Yes side or for the No side, leading up to the referendum. So little money was spent that citizens who went out to vote and who should have known were scratching their heads and wondering, in effect, what the bill was all about.

The question was fairly simple. All the question said was, “Do you support the recommendations made by the citizens’ assembly?” In a nutshell, that’s what it said. People would either say, “Yes, I support the citizens’ assembly,” or, “No, I do not.” But when people were asked, “What does this mean? What do the recommendations mean?” they were perplexed and hard pressed to explain the STV system that the citizens had come up with. I am hard pressed to understand it too. I have referred to it variously as an arcane system, a system no one can understand, a system that works at best in Ireland and Malta, the only two places on earth that use it, in which it is a long and elaborate process of trying to determine a winner.

The public education in BC was virtually non-existent, and people there told us, “If you are going to establish a citizens’ assembly, if you are going to empower them and come out with a referendum question, then it behooves the government to put adequate resources toward it.” That has not been done. There is nothing in the body of the bill that allows for the expenditure of money. There is nothing in the body of the bill that allows the minister of democratic renewal to do anything leading up to October 10. There is nothing here for the amount of money that can be spent. There is a prescription and there is a way in law to limit how much money can be raised and how much can be spent, but certainly there is nothing here for public education.

Fair Vote Ontario, among other groups, requested that some money put aside for this. It need not be put in the bill, but I was hoping that it could at least have been put in the budget we voted on today. But there was no money in the budget for this. I don’t know whether there is going to be any, but there is no money in the budget for the referendum. Look through it as long and as hard as you want; there is nothing there.

It has been estimated that in order to do the job, you would need about \$1 per person to be spent on education. It can be a whole bunch of things: TV advertisements, radio spots or shows, print media, multi-language media, household flyers that are put out when the citizens’ assembly comes to their decision and again closer to the election to inform people what the vote is all about. It is estimated that about \$1 per person in Ontario will need to be spent to inform the public about what the referendum contains. But there is nothing in the bill; there’s nothing in the budget. There’s no government funding for it. I

don’t know how people are going to find out about the system.

I am thankful that the 103 citizens, in their wisdom, a week or a week and a half ago, made the decision, in looking at STV versus MMP, to disregard the STV model, because I don’t know how you would explain that for \$5 per elector. I don’t know how you would explain that system for \$10 per elector. In any event, here we have no money at all.

We in committee suggested, and I put forward a motion, that we should allot a budget for the Yes and No sides or for the education sides or for a motion to the Chief Election Officer to conduct a public awareness campaign, and every single Liberal on the committee voted that down. I don’t know where the money is coming from. I don’t know what you intend to do. I don’t know how the public will ever be educated.

Add these up—the 60% rule making it impossible, the question being decided by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and the fact that under the regulations no money at all is being spent for public education on a system that people do not fully understand—and it is tantamount to saying this is not going to happen. I believe that’s what the government intends and intended all along.

The 103 people will make a recommendation this weekend. Their recommendation will come down to a couple of things. They made a recommendation last weekend on whether it was mixed member proportional or single transferable vote. As I’ve already said, the single transferable vote is arcane, it is difficult and it is used in only two places on earth: on the island of Malta and in Ireland, and in those places it is used to dramatic effect.

If one goes there—I’ve been to Malta, a long time ago. I didn’t discuss electoral stuff; I was there as a tourist. But in Ireland, if you discuss what happens as a result of their voting procedures, you will discover several things. Number one is that part of the mandate of this committee is to try to find a way of involving women and minorities. You would be surprised to learn that the STV system does neither. The STV system allows for families and extended families to hold on to seats, sometimes indefinitely, for years. The only women in the Irish Parliament are there by virtue of either being the widow or the daughter of a deceased member who takes over the seat upon the death of the male member. Those are the women who are in the Legislature in Ireland. The STV system is even more brutal in Malta, where virtually no women are elected to their Parliament.

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So I am glad that the citizens came to the conclusion last week that this is not a system that has much future in Ontario. If there was to be any bellyaching by people about how many members of the Legislature there are, when we questioned the Irish authorities on how to make the STV system work in Ontario, they were very blunt. In Ireland the STV system works because there is approximately one member elected to the Irish Parliament, the Dáil, for every 15,000 people. There are four- and five-

member constituencies, and so you either have 60,000 or 75,000 electors in your constituency and you elect four or five people, not the top four or five but in a complicated set of votes to get you there. In order for this system to work in Ontario, the people told us we would have to have 600 members of the Legislature. Let me underline that for anybody who wants the STV system: In order for the STV system to work as well as it works in Ireland with all of the pitfalls, we would have to have 600 members of this Legislature; that is, every seat in all the public galleries would be full of screaming politicians trying to get their voices heard. I want to say that I thank the citizens' assembly for coming to the conclusion that the STV system is not one that the majority of Ontarians would support in a democratic ballot.

I also read the newspapers, the same article that was quoted in its entirety by my friend from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, talking about the mixed member proportional system. Let the members of the assembly know that this is not just a German model. It is, in fact, the model that is used in almost every democratic institution in every country in the world other than our own. It is used in Great Britain, save and except for the Mother of Parliaments at Westminster, which continues to use the system we use here in Ontario, called first past the post. In all the regional assemblies of Great Britain, particularly in Scotland and Ireland, they use the mixed member proportional system. They use it in Germany, they use it in the Scandinavian countries—they use it literally all over Europe. They use it in New Zealand, the most recent convert to that system of governance. The system has its detractors. One of them, and I heard my good friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka allude to this again, is that we would increase enormously the size of this Legislature up to 129 members.

Mr. Miller: No, I said the geographic area.

Mr. Prue: Okay. I'm going to get to that too. I don't want to presuppose what the good citizens are going to be thinking or debating or doing this weekend, but I want to allay the fears of those who think that this is some kind of system that is going to so radically change this Legislature that it would be unworkable. In fact, all that would happen is that people would have two ballots. All that would happen is that a proportion—and I've read the number 90—would be elected exactly as we elect them now and the second ballot would be for party preference. After the 90 were elected and there were another 39 people to be put into the House, they would come there by way of the proportional ballot. So if a party got 20% of the vote, that party would get 20% of the seats. What a radical idea. And if a party did extremely well, as the Liberals did in the last election with 46% of the vote, they would still end up with a majority government, because there are only 39 seats available and the portions would go primarily to the opposition. As the Benzie article quite clearly pointed out, it would still result in a majority, although not in as large a majority government as was produced in 2003.

But the good thing about the system—which I hope the citizens' assembly is coming forward with, and which the select committee was mandated to look at—was, how do you do three things?

How do you increase the number of women in this House? One need only look at one election after the mixed member proportional system in Scotland and Wales. It took exactly one election for them to go from the same as us—15%, 20%, 25% women—to, in the case of Scotland, 48% women elected in the first MMP Parliament, and in the case of Wales, 52% in the first MMP Parliament. The transformation that took place was to allow the party, through list systems and other minor parties, to put forward equal numbers of women candidates, both in the constituency and on the list, to ensure that when the final results were made known that there were women in the House proportionate to their numbers in the country as a whole. It also allowed for people who had never heretofore been represented in the Legislature to find an equal voice. It allowed people who were recent immigrants although citizens to have an opportunity to participate and to have their names added.

In a country like Canada and in a province like Ontario, do you know we could actually have a First Nations member here? Do you know we could have one? We've never had one. Do you know that in a province like Ontario, if you have an MMP system—I'm thinking about the leaders of the parties; the leaders of the parties have constituencies to look after, because they're members just like all of us—that might unencumber them in order to do the job they need to do without looking after constituency work. It's an idea that really needs to be looked at.

I am not fearful of what the citizens are going to recommend. I don't know. I got two phone calls today asking me did I like it if the citizens went in this direction or that direction on regional lists versus province-wide lists. That is of no never-mind to me. I believe that the citizens will make the best decision and that it behooves all of us who have allowed this process to go on for six months to hear them out, to not be fearful of an idea they might have and to listen to what they have to say.

We have rules in all of the provinces and they all vary. Ontario does not have a rule in this, although we've now developed one for this election. I look to what Quebec has done, and they probably have set the standard. They fund their people. They fund the Yes and the No sides. They have clear, unambiguous questions now, although they didn't in the last referendum. They allow the majority to prevail.

I looked at New Brunswick, what was happening under the previous government of Mr. Lord, and they were going in the same election: 50% plus one; clear, unambiguous questions set by the Legislature; adequate funding.

I look at British Columbia, which has learned by their own mistake of 60% and having to do it again: clear, unambiguous questions; funding for both sides. The next referendum, they promise, will be very different from the

last one in terms of money, in terms of expertise and, they hope, in terms of the general outcome.

And then I look at us. We have a province here and an opportunity. We have an opportunity to make a real difference if we listen to what the citizens have to say—if we give it a chance, if we don't run off and say the constituencies are going to be larger, as my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka had to say. Some of them may, in fact, be larger.

Mr. Bisson: They're worried about large constituencies? They should visit mine.

Mr. Prue: Yes, exactly. You have a large one. I mean, I have a larger one—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: —in terms of population, although not in terms of area.

I can't repeat it, but it was quite funny, my colleague from Nepean–Carleton. But I don't think that one should be over the public airway.

2030

We need to look at that. We need to look at not only the size of the constituencies and how many people we represent, but the geographical size. It was one of the mandates that was given to the all-party select committee; but they had other mandates, and I've gone through some of those: to increase the percentage of women; to increase the percentage of people of our First Nations; to try to get people plugged back into the process, which many feel has failed them.

Mr. Speaker, you know that over the last number of Parliaments, from the time when I was a young man, when there was an 80% turnout in provincial elections, to today, when the percentage turnout barely makes 50%—something needs to be done to reinvigorate the process. I don't know whether it is a change in the procedure in here where you don't have people yelling back and forth at you during question period, I don't know whether it's a change to the electoral system, I don't know whether it's getting better candidates or allowing more women into the process, but I think all of the above is probably a good start. We need to be open, and to that point we need to change a system which has not worked in this province since 1937. As I said before, that was the last Parliament elected in Ontario that actually had a majority vote—more than 50% voted for the winning party. Since then, no party has ever got 50% again. The closest we've come in a long time was the last election, 2003, at 46.6%. But we have to understand that the likelihood of gaining that 50% is remote. If the citizens so choose, if they advocate change and if the citizens of Ontario in the plebiscite on October 10 agree, who knows? The face of this Parliament could change. We could have members of the Green Party. I think they should be heard. We may have more women and others.

I take heart from the words of our students. I got here the other day the Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform draft report. It is in such huge print on the front they must have known it was for me because I can read it without my glasses. But on page 21 it's in much smaller

print. I quote just what students, young people, have to say, because this is the future. We need to listen to the young people. They have gone out for weeks and weeks and months and discussed this in their classrooms and come and made decisions. What they have to say is instructive to me, because we do it for them in the end. And they say, "Together, the results of the students' assembly program send a message that might sound familiar: Let's consider change. Let's listen carefully to people who say that some things are not working as well as they should and that there is a better way. But let's be cautious. Let's give some credit to the system we have now for getting us this far, and pay close attention to the concerns of citizens, young and old, who see a great deal of value in it." That, out of the mouth of babes, says it all.

We in this Legislature need to listen to them. We need to consider the change that we have been mandated to do and the mandate that we have given to our citizens' assembly. We ought not to prejudge them. We should embrace the change if and when it comes for what it will do and not be fearful that because we have done this this way for more than a hundred years, it is the best way. Everywhere else in the world that has studied what we do has rejected the way we do it. Every new democracy, in setting itself up, has looked at the first past the post system and has rejected that system. And they do so for good reason. They do it because it often does not reflect the will of the people. If the people vote a certain way, they expect a certain result. I can think of no better example than what happened to the poor Progressive Conservative Party under Kim Campbell as leader—25% of the vote in Canada, two seats out of 300.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): Don't cry for us.

Mr. Prue: No, I'm not going to cry, but I am going to cry for the fact that 25% of the people of Canada chose Kim Campbell and her team to represent them and they only got two seats, or about less than 1%—

Ms. MacLeod: One was Elsie Wayne.

Mr. Prue: One was Elsie Wayne and the other was Jean Charest, who's now a Liberal. But in any event, that is the most telling example of what this kind of system disproportionately does. If we can change that, if we can look at a way that that does not happen again, then I think the country will be better off for it.

I look forward to a time and an opportunity to debate this further, but I leave the rest of the debate to the good citizens this coming weekend, and I wish them Godspeed.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I do think it's appropriate that we are debating this bill a day after our nation recognized the sacrifices that were made by Canadians at Vimy. Those sacrifices were made by Canadian soldiers so that we can enjoy the freedom and the democracy that we have, and we have the freedom to consider how our democracy operates and if there are better ways for the people in our country to be represented. So I think it is really quite appropriate that we are talking about this bill

this evening, given the great sacrifice that those soldiers made so that we would have the right to do it tonight.

I do want to perhaps address three points that were made by the member from Beaches–East York, who I think did a very good job over the last hour presenting his position on this bill. He did raise the point around public education and the importance of ensuring that the people of Ontario have an opportunity to be very clear on what the question is going to be, if it is in fact the recommendation of the assembly that there would be a referendum, and that there needs to be a lot of education for the people of Ontario so that they are clear on what they would be voting on. I agree with him on that point.

I also, though, want to address his point about the threshold. I think it's important that I offer another perspective. I respect the one he's provided, but John Ibbitson has indicated that "50% plus one just isn't enough. Referendums are important instruments. Not everyone shows up to vote, and not everyone who votes casts that vote knowledgeably.... For a referendum to validate a major change, the result must indicate a consensus, both within the overall population and among its regions."

Ms. MacLeod: I'm pleased to add my voice to the debate tonight and I appreciate the work of my colleague from Beaches–East York and the comments, obviously, from the Minister of Agriculture. He discussed something, which was increasing the women in this House. Obviously, tonight we're a healthy number here. As one of the five youngest women ever to be elected to this Legislature and the youngest ever of our party, the Progressive Conservative Party, in either level of government, I can just say that getting me here wasn't as tough as it is keeping me here. And I don't mean that electorally, I don't mean that in a campaign perspective. But let's talk about this institution as a whole, which is something that this bill doesn't do. And it's something, the Speaker will note, that I've had many discussions with him on. But let's talk about fixing the lack of productivity in this Legislature and what it means to actually be reflective of the people we represent.

As a young mom, and I know I'm not the only one here—we could do a lot to modify this institution very easily together. Things come to mind: tightening the standing orders to make this place flow a little bit quicker and modifying the sitting hours so we're not here at 8:45 at night and maybe we could be with our children. That would be more appealing to women my age who would like to run for this Legislature. In addition is the fact that we don't have a daycare facility on the premises here that actually would work for someone like me and the member from Stoney Creek, so that if we did have to sit in the evenings there would be care for our children very close to us, or during the day, so we could be near our families, especially when we live so far away, like my friends from Nickel Belt and Kenora. I think we have to start looking. As legislators here, just recently we were able to break for the first time in Ontario's history the glass ceiling: Women now occupy 25% of the seats in

this Legislature and we should all be very proud of that, and we're from all three political parties. But what we've got to do together is work to modify this Legislature as a whole.

2040

Mr. Bisson: I just want to say that I'll wholeheartedly support most of what was said by my colleague just now in regard to her response. The one I have a bit of problem with is the rule changes, because any time I've seen rule changes around this place, they've been on how to stifle members from being able to participate. I certainly don't want to invite that kind of discussion.

I want to just say for the record that I thought the member from Beaches–East York, my colleague and friend, put out the technical arguments about what this is all about and what some of the difficulties are with the bill. We in the New Democratic Party support the idea of changing the electoral system. We believe it makes a lot more sense. Why shouldn't this Legislature reflect the true results of provincial elections every four years? Why should we have a situation where a majority of members could be in a government caucus who haven't got 50% of the vote? I, for one, have always supported the idea of changing the electoral system.

The problem, however, is that the government, in drafting this bill, has done a number of things that quite frankly are going to make it fairly difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. You're going to have to get 64 ridings to say yes at 50%, but 60% of the population in total is going to have to vote in favour.

I just say that Canada has had all kinds of experiences with referendums and we've done everything else by 50%. Newfoundland joined Canada at 50%; Quebec tried to separate from Canada at 50%. God, we got flouridization in Toronto at 50%, but we can't fix an electoral system? We've got to put it at 60%? I say to the members across the way who support this that this is truly not democracy. Democracy is a principle of 50%. If we're afraid to go to the people of Ontario and trust in their wisdom at 50%, then maybe this government should basically step aside and decide not to run, because certainly this doesn't reflect democracy in my view.

Mrs. Jeffrey: I'm glad to join this debate, and I wanted to compliment the member from Beaches East–York. He's clearly been very thoughtful in his discussion of this issue tonight. He's brought a lot of technical issues to the fore.

To anybody who was able to listen to him this evening, he spoke about the merits of various systems. He tries to honestly provide us with some depth on this issue, because it's very easy to look at the surface of what we're discussing. But clearly we all struggle with how to provide the best democratic representation in this House on a regular basis, based on the kinds of legislation that come before us and the kinds of issues our constituents bring us.

We heard from the last member that, ultimately, the NDP supports electoral change, as do we. We just disagree about how we will do it. I appreciate the debate

we've heard tonight. We've heard it from student representatives; we've heard it from high school students. We've all been very impressed by the depth and the thoughtfulness of the responses we've had. I remember, when we were doing the hearings, we had some really effective presenters who were passionate, who came through snowstorms to speak to us. We waited to hear from them because they were worth waiting for. They had clearly done their homework, they had thought about this issue, and they gave us some very meaningful dialogue on what we should be considering when we finally get the report from the citizens' assembly. I look forward to it in May.

I think we have always been wondering whether or not that assembly will in fact recommend a change. We've heard tonight that most people expect that change to occur. Certainly this citizens' assembly should be commended for the amount of hours, thought and diligence they brought to the task of looking at electoral reform.

The Acting Speaker: I'll return to the member for Beaches–East York for his reply.

Mr. Prue: I'd like to thank the Minister of Agriculture and Food, the members from Nepean–Carleton, Timmins–James Bay and Brampton Centre for their very thoughtful comments.

In the two minutes I have, I'd like to deal with two of the questions and comments, the first from the Minister of Agriculture. She quotes John Ibbitson. I would be persuaded by John Ibbitson except that he is a columnist, he's not a political scientist, although I do agree he knows a great deal about politics. But in any event, if you read his earlier two columns on this subject, you will see he is diametrically opposed to any change in our system. Of course, when you are diametrically opposed to any change in the system, taking the position that he does, that it requires more than 50%, is a natural flow. I can see that in some of the government members who are a little antsy about changing the system and have seized upon the same conclusion as Mr. Ibbitson. I take that for what it's worth; a man who opposes any change finds a venue and a model for it not to happen.

In terms of my colleague from Nepean–Carleton, she is absolutely right, but I want to give her great tidings from Scotland. Scotland, after they instituted and got 48% women, the first action they took was to build a daycare centre. The second action was that they stopped all meetings at 5 o'clock at night in order to allow parents to go home to be with their children. They made it into a woman-friendly place, as is Wales. And it is not just unique to that country. Also in the Legislature of Nunavut, which does not use the first past the post system but is collegial, the first action was that the women there, who had not quite a majority, had a women's caucus that came up with the same conclusion, and in fact they have daycare services and no meetings after 5 o'clock. Would that there were more women in this House.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It's a privilege to speak on Bill 155, the Electoral System

Referendum Act, 2006. I think there are a number of general principles that this particular bill is attempting to hopefully enshrine and really diffuse: democracy, inclusivity, a representative voice of Ontarians and citizen engagement.

As we're talking about democratic renewal, I thought I might, Speaker, with your permission, quote one of the great democrats of the century, that is, John F. Kennedy who wrote, "The efforts of the government alone will never be enough. In the end, the people must choose and the people must help themselves." "Democracy is the most demanding of all forms of government in terms of the energy, imagination, and public spirit required of the individual."

I think that part of what I can determine exists in Bill 155, and yes, going forward, subject to the recommendations of the citizens' assembly, and yes, going forward, subject to the outcome of the referendum, which will be part and parcel of the October 2007 election, embodies some of the essence and the best spirit of that particular citation from President Kennedy.

I would also like to acknowledge some of the remarks that were made earlier with reference to this particular bill, for example, from the Minister of Agriculture and Food. I think her remark citing the fact that we are really the inheritors of a deep struggle for democracy and we have this privilege, this opportunity to reframe, to reconstruct, to reconstitute what we consider to be our democracy, is certainly one of the great testaments to our form of government. I would also like to commend our honourable colleague from the opposite side the member from Nepean–Carleton, that yes indeed, we need to have all voices heard, whether it's based on gender or ethnocultural diversity and so on. And that is hopefully part and parcel of the recommendations that should come forward.

Mention has been made, for example, of student assemblies. I had an opportunity just recently to speak at the Ontario model parliament. It was held at Upper Canada College, and I was pleased to be joined by my colleague from the third party the MPP from Parkdale–High Park. One of the things that we were struck by was the energy and enthusiasm and really the engagement of the students. Hopefully, that bodes very well for this entire enterprise of democratic renewal.

With due respect to the thoughtful and considered remarks from his former worship the mayor of East York, the member for Beaches–East York, I thought it was somewhat confusing in the sense that his citation of the experience from other jurisdictions—whether it's, for example, Scotland or Wales where they have endless numbers of parties represented, and perhaps even most particularly with the almost imminent or impending loss or fracture, separation of our Dominion, the country of Canada based on that, I would say, absolutely literal-minded definition of a majority—I think his citation of those experiences actually supports our legislation here that there should be more vigorous, numerically higher support for a change that is going to be so fundamental

for democracy. As some of our colleagues mentioned earlier, we are not creating this particular system overnight from scratch, *de novo*, clean slate. It's a system that has been inherited, it's a system that has been tweaked over the years, but it's a system that is always a work in progress, like perhaps all the various files of a modern government.

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Parts of the aspects are particularly worthy of support, and a number of individuals have dealt with these issues: for example, the extra support, which is perhaps our answer to clarity, that if there is a fundamental 60% double supermajority support for these types of fundamental reforms, then they will be enacted.

Now, there have been a number of different aspects. I'm not entirely sure why the MPP for Beaches—East York sort of discredited the *Globe and Mail* as well as columnist John Ibbitson, perhaps for lack of professor designation, but I think his quotation about “50% plus one just isn't enough. Referendums are imperfect instruments” really speaks to the heart that if we are going to make these very strong changes, really reorganizing the representation in Parliament, what voices will be heard, it does demand more than that kind of, I guess you could say, numerical coincidence of 50% plus one being, yes, an official majority. That's what we mean when we're talking about foundational change requiring a solid majority.

There are a number of other aspects, but ultimately, in terms of trying to increase the voices, the inclusivity, the representation, in a word and a package deal, the flow of democracy is what I think Bill 155 is all about and why it is worthy of our support.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bisson: Again, I just want to get back to the issue in regard to one of the central parts of this particular debate and what's in this legislation. I again want to say I support the concept of moving towards proportional representation. I believe that the province would be well served in the end if the Legislature was made up of the composition of whatever the percentage of the vote was in a general election by party. That way, clearly the will of the people would be followed in the Legislature. As an example, if a party such as the Liberal Party in the previous election, who got 48% of the vote, got 48% of the seats, it would definitely mean to say that they'd have to work with the opposition in order to pass contentious legislation.

For example, we have a budget bill that's coming before us now where the government has decided to tax the De Beers mining project, the Victor mining project up in Attawapiskat, from 5% to 13% on royalty. The government goes, “Oh, what does that mean?” It means to say that basically we're taking the tax jurisdiction in mining in Ontario from being one of the best in the country to, quite frankly, the worst. What that means for explorationists and what that means for the development of new mines in northern Ontario, quite frankly, is disastrous.

I attended last week, along with other members here in the Legislature, Meet the Miners, where the mining community stood before us, specifically De Beers, and pointed to the presentation in the back of the room and said, “See that? That's the first diamond mine ever to exist in the province of Ontario and probably will be the last because of this government's budget, having to do with moving the royalty from 5% to 13%.” My point in this debate is the government would have to go and get somebody on the other side of the aisle to support such a concept. And you know what? If the opposition on the other side decided not to support it, not a bad thing. It means to say that the government would, for once, have to listen to the stakeholders or the people of the province of Ontario, in this case the people who live in north-eastern Ontario, when it comes to mining. So I say, bring on proportional representation, because at the end of the day maybe we're going to get some true representative views by way of legislation in this House.

Mr. Levac: The member for Etobicoke North spent some time explaining the process and what are the outcomes. I want to re-reference John Ibbitson's comments for two reasons. One is that there's an interesting reflection when referenda take place during an election. I've heard this myself, and I remember that my friend from Beaches—East York was referencing his participation on the Yes side. One of the things that came true during an election—not during that particular referendum; it was independent, as he would acknowledge. I think what Ibbitson is trying to say is that when you start attaching an election to a referendum at the same time on a ballot, where you make references to a government, there may be cause for concern that the people are referencing it as a report card on the performance of the government. That's not what this is about. To separate the two, we have to make sure that people are clear on this. He's saying and advising that 60% would eliminate some of the potential of somebody misusing the referendum, not to speak about democratic reform but maybe to speak to their discontent with the government. That's a concern I would have.

The second portion of that would be to make sure the opposition wouldn't be using that as a tool to say, “Let's go after the government by voting no,” or “Let's vote in this way because it might mark up the government a little bit.” I honestly think we're above that, but I think there are concerns that the electorate may see it as that, and would there be someone taking advantage of that? I think that to say Ibbitson is wrong in assessing that 60% is too high is unfair as to his capacity to see what goes on during elections.

Mr. Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments on the speech by the member from Etobicoke North. I just came in as the member from Timmins—James Bay was talking about mining, and I'm not quite sure how he worked that into Bill 155, which is about referenda. But I think it's probably something like the fact that if this government had kept its promise in the last election, when it said it wasn't going to increase taxes and then got elected and

had a huge tax increase in the form of the health tax, and then he bridged to this new mining tax that was just brought in.

I was at the same Meet the Miners reception that the member from Timmins–James Bay attended, and I agree with him: De Beers was there and they were not happy with the way they're being treated by this government and the way they were surprised. It's never good to be surprised when you're in business and investing \$1 billion in the economy of Ontario and creating jobs in the far north, in the Attawapiskat area, where jobs, employment and opportunity are so needed. The representative from De Beers characterized the way they've been treated by this government with the surprise increase in the new diamond tax, which applies only to them because they are the only diamond mine in Ontario, just about to open, and they get a surprise tax. The representative said he had 20 or 30 e-mails from his company headquarters that he was delaying responding to because he had sold them on the idea of investing in Ontario, based on stable government, and now he had to answer where this tax came from—"This Third World tax" was the way he characterized it—and was going to have to explain that. He pointed out that this may be the only diamond mine that ever opens in Ontario if these are the sorts of policies this government is going to bring forward. That, of course, relates back to the broken promise by the McGuinty government in the last election, when it said it wasn't going to increase taxes.

Mr. Prue: I listened intently to the member from Etobicoke North, trying to understand his reference to me as the former mayor, which of course was true, and that my argument actually gives credence to his own. I have struggled and tried to determine how what I had to say, quoting all the authorities, from Dr. Dennis Pilon to all the people who came before the committee, opposed to the government's proposal to have a 60% threshold, would give any credibility to his own. I struggle with that, and I'm still trying to figure out what he was trying to reference. Perhaps, in his two-minute rebuttal at the end, he can explain how quoting all those learned people from Ontario and British Columbia and the arguments of past referenda in this province, in Quebec and in Newfoundland somehow play into an argument for 60%, because I don't understand it. Perhaps it's just me and the lateness of the evening.

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As well, to buttress that argument, the member from Brant went on to talk about Ibbitson. I don't want to get too far away from what that learned writer may have had to say. In fact, in some of his earlier writings he may have talked about the confusion that takes place at the time of referenda and a general election being held together. But in the opinion of the government—his own government—and the select committee as well, it was the best opportunity to ensure a high enough turnout to warrant the actual holding of the referendum. Even in a place like Prince Edward Island, where they had a 65% turnout for the new link—the bridge—they only had a

30% turnout on a stand-alone referendum. This way, we would ensure at least a 50% or 60% turnout, exactly as the election.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke North has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Qaadri: I'd like to recognize the participation of my colleagues in this chamber: the MPPs for Timmins–James Bay, Brant, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Beaches–East York.

With your permission, Speaker, should these individuals, particularly the MPP for Timmins–James Bay and the MPP for Parry Sound–Muskoka, have more opportunity to speak on Bill 155, I'd encourage them to address more of their remarks to the substance of the bill than to other pieces of legislation or controversies that are flowing through this place.

The MPP for Beaches–East York poses a direct question. I was struck particularly with his almost lament that we almost lost the province of Quebec to the Dominion of Canada with this numerically coincident idea of 50% plus one being a majority. You seem to require, from your remarks or from the tone of them, that such a fundamental change to the structure of Canada, our Constitution and our framework of democracy would require more than just that absolute numeric majority. I thought that was part of what Bill 155 is trying to establish: If you are going to make such foundational change so that you may hopefully remedy some of the lack of representation and, I guess you could say, the proportional disconnect between the number of seats, the number of votes cast, the popular vote and all that, you'd want to make sure that the individuals who were casting ballots were fully aware, fully apprised of what they were voting on. I thought that was partly why Bill 155 was worthy of support.

In any case, accountability, transparency and citizen engagement, that's what Bill 155 is all about and that's why it deserves our support.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on Bill 155 and present some of my views on democratic reform. I should qualify that: I'm presenting some of the views or analysis of one of my staffers, Josh Deming, and also some of the views of my daughter, Brittany Barrett. She just submitted an essay, in her second year at Brock, titled Electoral Systems: A Comparison of Non-Proportional and Proportional Systems. Much of the discussion that's been going on since the last election has probably generated a few essays across our university system, and that's a good thing.

In reviewing my daughter's essay, she points out that no electoral system can create true proportional representation. Each system has its own distortions in the vote-to-seat ratio. I'll try to expand on that a little bit, but at the outset, it is important to distinguish between electoral reform and democratic reform.

One definition that electoral reform encompasses is: any measure that will serve to change the mechanical

process by which we elect our representatives. That is the focus of this particular piece of legislation brought forward by the Dalton McGuinty government.

Secondly, democratic reform, on the other hand, encompasses any measure that will serve to improve democratic governance, and it's important because electoral reform in a sense is a subset of the broader democratic reform. Electoral reform is one way, one of many possible tools that can be used for the broader goal of improving democratic governance within the province.

Before we begin searching for any solutions to some of our democratic woes in this province, we have to ask ourselves the following question: What's wrong with the system? I'm not convinced that this bill, Bill 155, titled Electoral System Referendum Act, is really the answer to what is wrong. The question remains. Things are wrong, and I think it's safe to say there are a number of criticisms that we hear. I'm a door knocker; I hear this and I see this constantly as I go door to door. Public cynicism right now is very, very high. The government that people are getting is not necessarily the government they voted for. The Ontario Legislature is not necessarily proportionate to society at large. As we heard this evening, there's a gender imbalance. There are other imbalances with respect to demographics. In many ways, the Ontario Legislature is not functioning as well as it could be as a forum for democratic debate.

That's not an exhaustive list, but there are some criticisms and a list that I feel provides a bit of a foundation for the debate this evening.

So, for example, how do we alleviate public cynicism? How do we ensure that the government we get is the government we voted for? How do we encourage the formation of a Legislature that reflects society, and how do we improve the ability of this House to act as a forum for democratic debate? More importantly, will changing the way we elect MPPs—in other words, changing the electoral system—answer these criticisms? Clearly, it won't. It would obviously deflect or suppress some of the criticisms, but ultimately electoral reform is not the be-all and end-all for democratic reform.

I feel this particular bill, Bill 155, does miss the point somewhat. By way of analogy, we could look at our democracy in the province of Ontario and some of its problems compared to a common cold: the itchy eyes, the sneezing, the runny nose, the cough. Bill 155, in a sense, would offer some cough syrup perhaps, but it doesn't really focus on the root problem, the cold itself. The syrup would obviously suppress the cough, as it is intended to do, but really not get to the root cause. Another analogy: the age-old analogy of the deck chairs on the Titanic. I see a bill here that's essentially an effort to reupholster the deck chairs on the Titanic. It might make it look a little better, but it's not going to deal with the underlying problem.

I mentioned public cynicism as a symptom of a problem in our democracy. This coming October, I suspect, many MPPs will be running door to door, and they're going to run into people who are going to indicate

to them, "Well, you're all liars. All politicians are liars." This is what often happens when you have a government that is led by an individual who doesn't tell the truth. That being said, I tend to believe that public cynicism is caused more by the way politicians act once they're elected rather than by the process of how they are elected. So what would happen if, instead of changing the electoral system, we pursued some other basic reforms: keeping campaign promises, for example? Promises will be rolling out within a matter of months.

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Respecting the role of MPPs, taking a look at essentially a lack of productivity in this particular Legislature; improving decorum in the House—we've seen significant progress on that front; improving the flow of information to all media across the province; and improving the flow of information to the general public. If we move forward with some of these basic democratic reforms, in a sense there would be less need for any kind of window dressing or electoral reform, and it would go a long way to improve our form of democratic governance.

I can say with certainty, for example, that people in Ontario did not vote for the health tax. They did not vote for the delisting of health services. They did not expect the lottery scandal and the cover-up that went with that. They did not vote for broken promises, an inflated public debt, cuts to agriculture. The list could go on and on. If this government was truly interested in democratic reform, let alone electoral reform, it would take a look at itself and reconsider saying anything or paying anything or doing anything to get elected. That would be a good start.

In 2003, we were told about the fact that there would not be a tax increase. We could have been told the truth. We could have been told the truth about the purposely broken promise to families of autistic children. Farmers could have been told the truth—

The Acting Speaker: I have to caution the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant to ensure that his comments fall within what is parliamentarily acceptable.

Mr. Barrett: Thank you, Speaker.

The government could admit that nothing has been done to protect people in Ontario from this lottery scandal and the cover-up—

Interjections.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Goofball.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): What did you call me?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Goofball.

Mr. Barrett: I think we all agree in this House that promises have been broken. There are something like 50 entries—

Mr. Prue: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just heard a minister call a member on this side of the House a "goofball," and I think he should apologize. As a matter of fact, I think he should be removed.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm the one he directed it to, and all I did was ask him—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Would the Minister of Public Infrastructure like to say anything?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I'll withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: I'll return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant.

Mr. Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. I guess I'm not—

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: You're an idiot.

The Acting Speaker: We have 15 minutes to go. I ask the House to come to order and I'd ask all members to demonstrate respect for each other and the fact that each of us is elected to this place to represent our constituents.

The member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We're talking about the use of proper parliamentary language this evening, and I believe I heard a comment from the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke calling the minister an idiot, and he's not in his seat. I don't think that's very appropriate either. We should have apologies all around.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the Minister for Public Infrastructure Renewal to stand in his place and withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to return to his seat and withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

Mr. Yakabuski: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I'll return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant.

Mr. Barrett: As I indicated earlier, there have been significant improvements in decorum in this House. I think this evening is an example.

I'm not convinced that compelling a Premier to keep his promise would be essentially considered a contribution to electoral reform, but it would certainly go a long way. It would go a long way with respect to improving democratic governance, it would go a long way to enhancing democratic reform and it would go a long way to alleviating the public cynicism that we now see across this province. Compulsory honesty standards, for example, would ensure that people don't end up voting for a government to hold the line on taxes and then find out something different: to find out, actually, they were the brunt of the largest tax increase in the province of Ontario, something that we will reverse.

If the Premier would somehow reverse this course of breaking promises, this Legislature could become a true conduit of factual information about the actions of the executive branch. It's a simple tool, telling the truth. Somehow I feel it has been overlooked, and trying to reverse that is a possible tool we could employ to improve democratic governance and enhance democratic reform.

But we have to ask ourselves, how can we best achieve an Ontario Legislature that roughly mirrors the demographics of the society that we all attempt to represent? Some people believe that proportional representation systems are best equipped to create legislative assemblies that are microcosms of society. This government pushed PR, proportional representation, in the last election. I know it was certainly the issue at every all-candidates night that I was part of. Under a pure proportional representation system, each party draws up a list of possible MPPs. If there are, say, 107 seats in the Legislature, 107 names come forward. Rather than voting for individuals, in the pure system—this is what I favour, actually voting for individuals; it's a fairly simple concept—people vote for parties. In the simplest terms, if a party gets 40% of the vote, it would get 40% of the seats. In the very clear vote-to-seat ratio in an 107-seat Legislature, you would end up with 43 seats. In this scenario, the top 43 names out of 107 would then be in the Legislature.

Proponents of this approach to the electoral system argue that it's a type of system that would result in a Legislature that better reflects society, as parties would choose to draw up lists that mirror the demographics at large. I feel there are some flaws in that line of thinking. I'm skeptical of any system that gives political parties the power to choose their representatives. There's nothing to compel those parties to draw up representative lists, and it's very possible that party loyalists could well be rewarded with a spot in this House. Would they be constituency people? Would they attend functions every night and every weekend through their term, or would they be missing in action?

In so many things, I always favour using incentives rather than giveaways. Certainly, that's my approach to economics and job creation or trying to make changes in the way our environment is treated. For example, I prefer to give people tax breaks to encourage specific behaviour, like creating jobs, rather than forcing people to change their habits. The same is true politically. Rather than giving away positions in the Ontario Legislature, I prefer to remove some of the obstacles to participation.

Look at some of the possible reasons for alleged imbalance in this Legislature. I remain unconvinced that a new electoral system is the answer. It would do nothing to alleviate issues we heard this evening about balancing family with elected representation; for example, child care. That issue would remain, regardless of the result of a referendum this fall. As has been suggested tonight, why not explore the possibility of child care on the premises, which has the potential to remove barriers to participation or to remove barriers for members here to consider running again?

There are other reasons why there are imbalances in this Legislature. With this particular piece of legislation, we may well be barking up the wrong tree. In order to improve democratic governance, we need democratic reform, not just electoral reform. We shouldn't limit ourselves to just one facet of democratic reform, which in this case, as I define it, is very simply and nearly elec-

toral reform. So it's somewhat half-hearted. It would help, it would provide some improvements, but there are some flaws.

This coming October, people will be asked whether they wish to adopt a new electoral system. That's fine, but what if we move forward with a new system only to discover that the previous system actually worked better? In Bill 155, I see no evidence of a cooling-off period, a time for sober second thought. For example, in this province, if residents decide to change their gas supplier or their supplier of electricity, there's a period of time where they're able to change their mind, where they've got a bit of leeway. It may be an idea to amend this particular piece of legislation to ensure that people in Ontario would have an opportunity to give this idea a trial run, if you will, and if necessary, people would have the opportunity to revert back to the existing system, or perhaps to another approach.

I don't know whether this government is serious about moving forward with a referendum. We saw the Premier

ignore referendum legislation, for example, when the illegal health tax came in. It was not put forward to a province-wide vote; it was not put forward to a referendum, as required under the Taxpayer Protection Act.

Another question: Should people trust this government to craft the question? What is the question going to look like? Will it be a leading question? Will it be a double-barrelled question? Will it be a question that contains, perhaps, two or three questions within it? I'd certainly like to hear from survey researchers on that one because the wording, the crafting of the question, is so important and can have tremendous influence on the kind of answer you are going to get from people who walk into that voting booth with the opportunity to vote twice: once for a representative and once for a referendum.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. It being close to 9:30, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 2123.

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St. Paul's			

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 155A

N° 155A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 11 April 2007

Mercredi 11 avril 2007



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430

Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2

Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430

Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 11 April 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

ESTIMATES

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr. Speaker, I have a message from the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending 31 March 2008 and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): There are far too many unanswered questions surrounding the Lottogate scandal. Day after day we've asked the Premier and his minister responsible for lotteries straightforward questions that anyone without something to hide should be able to answer, yet the McGuinty government chooses to deflect, deny and dither over providing information.

When did the government first learn of the problems—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock.

Point of order, the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr. Speaker, I don't believe it's appropriate in this House that an honourable member calls into question the integrity of another through the use of language such as in the statement by the honourable member.

The Speaker: I would caution all members. We've been off to a rather rocky start in the last few weeks and we must be very careful about the language we choose.

The member for Cambridge.

Mr. Martiniuk: When did the government first learn of the problems involving suspicious lottery claims? How could the minister responsible be blissfully unaware of the insider-win problems for so long? What was the involvement of the minister's office and the Office of the

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 11 avril 2007

Premier in trying to cover up the extent of the scandalous situation?

These are the basic questions that speak to the integrity and accountability of any government. By dismissing our calls for answers, Premier McGuinty is denying the people of Ontario the truth behind this scandal.

These questions are outside the investigation of the Ombudsman and are not subject to a subsequent OPP investigation. An inquiry by a fully empowered legislative committee would provide the answers that the people of Ontario deserve. They may not be the answers the Premier wants the public to hear, but they are what accountability and integrity demand.

Instead of deflecting attempts to get at the truth, it is time the Premier dropped his focus on communications strategies and allowed a thorough examination of the government's role in Lottogate. What is Premier McGuinty trying to hide by avoiding an investigation?

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I rise in the House today to raise awareness about prostate cancer and to highlight the important work being done by the Prostate Extreme Team. It's a non-profit organization from my community of Oakville, and it raises funds and awareness for prostate cancer research.

I'd like to acknowledge the founder, Steve Hutton, as well as Sherrie and Richard Deschamps, who help run this amazing organization. The team organizes snowmobile rides, ATV rides and a variety of other activities and fun initiatives to raise money for this worthy cause. I was lucky enough to participate in the Bala sled ride this year and had a wonderful time in support of this important cause.

Prostate cancer is the number one cancer threat to men—that's your fathers, your sons, your brothers and your uncles—and early detection can literally save lives. Over 95% of prostate cancers are curable if treated in the earlier stages. Many men are reluctant to consider their risk, much less to discuss it with their doctor.

One in seven men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer within his lifetime. One in four of those men will die of this disease. Approximately 21,000 Canadian men are diagnosed each year. Numbers are only expected to increase as the baby boom generation ages.

Unfortunately, the cause of prostate cancer is not yet known. But with the hard work of groups like the

extreme team, continued research for a cure and better prevention gives us all hope.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): A government that lacks transparency, integrity, responsibility and accountability is a government that people can't trust.

Every day for two and a half weeks, Premier McGuinty and his minister responsible for Lottogate have arrogantly shrugged their shoulders at the lack of confidence in the integrity of our lottery system. They have refused to answer direct questions about who in the Premier's office and the minister's office was aware of allegations of fraud and why it was ignored. They've avoided explaining how they could have possibly missed or chosen to miss a comprehensive number of warning signals that should have spurred action on cleaning up this mess more than a year ago. They have tried to deflect responsibility for their lack of oversight by blaming everyone from the CBC to tens of thousands of hard-working retailers.

The government has provided contradictory answers about communications meetings and freedom-of-information requests involving the OLG. The Premier has failed to explain how and why several political spin doctors tied to his office, and with the Liberal election campaign team, were brought in to plot a communications strategy for Lottogate.

Many questions; no answers: The Premier has failed the test of leadership by hiding answers, ignoring questions and denying requests for the truth. If the Premier is confident that he and his minister should have no accountability for a scandal occurring under their watch, why won't this government agree to call for an open and transparent investigation by a legislative committee? Just what are they hiding?

MOOSE TAGS

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Yet again, we have a number of people in northeastern and northwestern Ontario who have been upset for years now with the moose tag allocation system. I want to bring to the House a report that has been basically prepared by both myself and Mr. Charlie Angus, the federal member for Timmins-James Bay, in regard to a consultation that we conducted across northeastern Ontario and northwestern Ontario in improvements to the current tag lottery systems.

I want to say, first of all, that this particular report will be available to members of the public, if they so wish to see it, by visiting my website at www.gillesbisson.com. I encourage the Minister of Natural Resources to accept this report as a recommendation of possible solutions to the current system. One thing is clear: The current system doesn't work. Far too many people who are interested in being able to obtain a tag are not able to do so, and have

been frustrated for as much as 25 years in not being able to receive a tag.

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The recommendations in this report look at a number of ways of making the system fairer, but at the same time protecting the herd, because the one thing that was very clear at all of the public meetings we had—anglers, environmentalists and others who attended all said that what is important is that we need to make sure there is a healthy moose population and that we don't endanger the herd. These recommendations are given within that context. I encourage the Minister of Natural Resources to take a look at some of these recommendations and, for once, to do something to resolve this long-standing problem.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I rise to speak about World Parkinson's Disease Day, which will actually be taking place on April 11, a day when the global Parkinson's community asks us to consider the plight of citizens diagnosed with this debilitating neurological disease—a disease that robs them of their independence, their mobility as well as their livelihood.

As a doctor, I can tell you that Parkinson's is a complex condition and one of the more common neurological disorders, and one that we should be concerning ourselves with urgently. It's thought to be a disease of the elderly, but unfortunately, it's actually being diagnosed more and more in individuals in their 20s, 30s and 40s. It strikes randomly, with no preference for gender, race or lifestyle. We don't know how to predict, prevent or cure Parkinson's, but we can work to keep those who are battling the disease as healthy as possible for as long as possible.

Some of us had the opportunity of meeting with a number of Parkinson's disease patients recently in the Legislature when they visited here a couple of weeks ago. Hopefully, through that initiative and others, we'll be able to enhance the appreciation of the public as well as members of this Legislature. Currently, for example, something like 40,000 Ontarians suffer from Parkinson's disease.

So on April 11, World Parkinson's Disease Day, I commend Ontarians with Parkinson's, their families and the association working with them for helping to better foster treatment and understanding.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): The Premier's response yesterday to a question about why Mr. David Menzies of Richmond Hill was stonewalled for weeks by the OLG is extremely troubling. The Premier told the member for Oak Ridges that "obviously, as a result of raising this matter here today, this has elevated it automatically as a priority...." Why is it that

until a problem is made public and the government is directly questioned, the Premier and his ministers are content to ignore the situation?

There is a pattern here. Last week, we brought forward the case of a senior from Ottawa who had also been ignored by the OLG upon raising a concern. Despite calling them since March 15, it was only when we questioned the Premier about his case on April 4 that the OLG decided to investigate.

The fact is that the minister ignored hints of suspicious insider wins and his chief of staff's awareness of the issue. When it was evident that The Fifth Estate was preparing to broadcast a story certain to rock Ontarians' faith in the integrity of our lottery system, the only plan of action from the McGuinty government was to prepare a communications strategy rather than address the problem.

Content to leave the OLG to investigate itself, the government sat back and did nothing but deflect until finally caught by the Ombudsman. And, incredibly, despite the Ombudsman's report, the people of Ontario continue to be stonewalled by the Premier and his minister as they repeatedly prioritize spin over substance, electability over accountability.

If there is no government cover-up, why won't the Premier take our advice to allow a Legislative committee to investigate the full story?

2007 BOOK DRIVE

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I rise to say thank you to the hundreds of people in the London area who donated thousands of books to children in remote northern communities through the Lieutenant Governor's 2007 book drive.

This was my third book drive, so I knew our community would rise to the occasion and fill a truck with books. But imagine my surprise when U-Haul donated a huge 26-foot truck instead of the small cube van I was expecting. So I put out a challenge to the community, "Please, help me fill this truck," and they did.

City Lights bookstore donated almost their entire children's section. The London Christian Elementary School delivered a school bus loaded with books to help fill the truck. Glencoe District High School put out the "Phoebe and Rory challenge," with staff member Scott McGregor's young children acting as spokespeople to get their community involved.

Many other schools in the London region also got involved. Retired teachers collected educational books from their neighbours and colleagues. High school and university students put in many hours packing up the books and loading the truck. Bill MacKenzie and Ken Regan gave up a whole day to drive the packed U-Haul to the drop-off site in Toronto. Altogether, between 40,000 and 50,000 books were collected.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this book drive such a success, and thank you to Lieutenant Gov-

ernor James Bartleman for giving us the opportunity to help our fellow citizens.

ONTARIO POWER GENERATION ENGINEERING BUILDING

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I rise today to commend the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Durham region and Ontario Power Generation for their work at the university. The official opening of the Ontario Power Generation engineering building on March 30 introduced the newest facility to UOIT. It holds the key to Ontario's future electricity system research and development and the faculty will prepare its students to be leaders in our increasingly technological world.

A \$10-million multi-year partnership between OPG and UOIT has been able to provide the OPG engineering building with equipment carefully selected to educate students about technologies of the future. The 40,000-square-foot, three-storey building includes 17 state-of-the-art labs.

Along with Energy Minister Dwight Duncan, OPG's chief nuclear officer, Tom Mitchell, and UOIT president, Ron Bordessa, I had the opportunity to view this building two weeks ago.

With this new facility, UOIT and OPG are helping train students to build a greener energy future for Ontario through its emerging energy systems lab with solar, wind, hydrogen and fuel cell technology.

The first group of students to complete this engineering program will be graduating this spring. OPG will be well served, as some of these graduates—these bright young minds—join them in their continuing efforts to energize Ontario.

Congratulations once again to UOIT, OPG and the Ministry of Energy on another step towards building a stronger Ontario.

BRENT POLAND

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Today I stand in the place that belongs to the people of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex to pay tribute to a courageous young man who died while attempting to bring stability and security to a region and a country that lack in both.

Corporal Brent Poland, stationed with the 2nd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, Hotel Company, was among six soldiers who were killed on Sunday in a bomb attack near Kandahar. Corporal Poland is the second soldier from Lambton county to die in Afghanistan.

Too often, we have a tendency to use words like "brave," "courageous" and "dedicated" with almost indifferent frequency and without proper context, and thus they tend to lose some of the magnificence of their meaning. In recognizing Corporal Brent Poland, these words fit the example and aptly eulogize this young man.

He gave the ultimate sacrifice—his life—for the freedom and improved quality of life for others, people he will never know and now will never have a chance to meet.

The people of the close-knit community of Camlachie and surrounding area where Brent was born and grew up are sharing a sense of loss. Brent was deeply loved by family, friends and comrades.

I know that everyone in this House joins me in extending our sympathy and appreciation to the Poland family for their sacrifice on behalf of all who seek to establish peace and stability in this world. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent for a moment of silence in memory of Corporal Poland.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed. Would all members and guests stand to observe a moment of silence?

The House observed a moment's silence.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES STRATEGY

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): Mr. Speaker, our government has a vision of hope and opportunity for Ontario's children and youth. To bring our vision into clear focus, we have been working closely with our many partners to build a system that is centred on the needs of our young people, a system that provides prevention, early intervention services and more community-based programs to help them overcome the challenges they face in their day-to-day lives.

We have been hearing from educators. We have been hearing from organizations that work with youth. Most importantly, we have been listening to young people, because they have told us that they can help us to help them. I have taken the time to meet with young people and to listen to what they have to say. At our ministry's annual youth summit, at round table discussions I have hosted across the province and through informal conversations, young people in Ontario have provided me with thoughtful suggestions on how government can be helpful to them.

One year ago, I announced the details of our government's three-year, \$28.5-million youth opportunities strategy, a broad plan to help young people faced with significant challenges achieve success and reach their potential. The strategy recognizes that some youth, particularly those in marginalized and underserved communities, often do not have access to opportunities and supports that would help them to find success.

Our youth opportunities strategy has several components that support young people, including a fully funded summer jobs for youth program which provides real-life work experience, training and support; partnering with

local police services to create exciting summer jobs in a new youth in policing program; youth outreach workers who build relationships with hard-to-reach youth, provide them with advice and connect them with appropriate programs and services; giving young people who have left high school without a diploma a chance to earn credits and gain work experience through the Ontario public service learn and work program; helping high school students under 18 years of age who are at risk of becoming involved or are already involved in violent and/or offending activity increase their chances of success in school; and a new website, youthconnect.ca, that provides a forum for young people to access information, services and resources that will help them make good choices, achieve success and contribute positively to their communities.

In 2006, the strategy's various programs were implemented in underserved neighbourhoods in Toronto and Durham region that were identified as having the greatest need. By all accounts, the strategy has been a tremendous success. Last summer in Toronto, approximately 800 young people embraced the opportunity to apply their talents and develop additional skills in a variety of jobs, such as camp leaders, assistant webmasters, research assistants, tutors, mural artists, child care assistants and mechanic assistants. Another 105 young people worked at interesting jobs with the Toronto and Durham regional police, such as hosting police information sessions at local community centres, cleaning up graffiti, providing car safety checks and demonstrations, as well as fleet maintenance and marine patrol.

Building on these and other successes over the past year, it has been my pleasure to announce that we are continuing the youth opportunities strategy in Toronto and Durham region and expanding it to underserved neighbourhoods in Windsor, London, Hamilton, Thunder Bay and Ottawa. In 2007-08, approximately 1,900 young people will benefit directly from the youth opportunities strategy's various components. In determining where to expand the youth opportunities strategy, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services worked with and listened to community stakeholders and partners, including regional government officials and representatives from the probation, police, recreation, community health and youth employment sectors, to identify the communities that could most benefit from components of the strategy. Factors such as income levels, unemployment rates and crime and education levels have contributed significantly to the selection of specific cities and communities.

As I traveled around the province announcing this expansion, I also had the opportunity to meet with a cross-section of youth in each community to hear about their challenges and to learn about programs and services that are working well for them. Looking ahead, we will continue to listen to young people. We will continue to engage stakeholders and we will continue to create partnerships that benefit the young people of Ontario.

Our government has confidence in our youth. We know that our youth are talented and ambitious and have

great potential. Through the expansion of our youth opportunities strategy, our government is determined to help them harness those talents and realize that potential.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Je suis très heureuse de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour souligner un autre exemple de l'engagement du gouvernement McGuinty envers la communauté francophone.

En proposant des modifications à la Loi sur les services en français dans le but de créer le Commissariat aux services en français, le gouvernement McGuinty remplit son engagement visant à assurer plus de responsabilité et de transparence à la prestation des services en français. Si elle est approuvée par cette Assemblée, la création proposée du Commissariat aux services en français marquerait une nouvelle étape extrêmement importante dans l'évolution des relations entre le gouvernement provincial et la francophonie ontarienne.

Elle donnerait aux francophones une voix plus forte, de même qu'un mécanisme démocratique par lequel ils et elles pourraient contribuer à façonner le système de prestation des services en français qui existe pour les servir.

Elle renforcerait la Loi sur les services en français en offrant un mécanisme indépendant pour encourager et veiller à l'observation de la loi, promouvoir les services en français et faire rapport des résultats.

More specifically, if adopted by this assembly, the proposed French-language services commissioner's office would have the authority to investigate whether the act is being complied with at his or her own initiative or in response to complaints, report on the results of the investigations, monitor government agencies' progress in providing French-language services and advise the minister responsible for francophone affairs on the administration of the French Language Services Act. At the same time, it would provide the province with an important new partner to work with in our efforts to improve French-language services.

Le gouvernement McGuinty croit fermement à l'importance d'assumer ses responsabilités quant à la prestation de services publics de grande qualité à tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes.

Sous la direction du premier ministre McGuinty, notre gouvernement a maintes fois fait la preuve de son engagement envers l'excellence des services publics en général, et des services en français en particulier.

Twenty years ago, Ontario adopted the French Language Services Act, thereby providing Ontario citizens with the right to receive government services in French. In the preamble of the act, the government explicitly recognized the important contribution of the French-

speaking population to the cultural heritage of this province.

Aujourd'hui, 20 ans après l'adoption de la Loi sur les services en français, nous avons de nombreuses raisons de célébrer la vitalité de la communauté francophone partout en province.

Avec la création proposée du Commissariat aux services en français, sous réserve de l'approbation de cette assemblée, le gouvernement est déterminé à améliorer les services publics offerts aux francophones et à faire le nécessaire pour que tous les francophones de l'Ontario reçoivent les services qu'ils méritent et dont ils ont besoin.

YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): I'm pleased to inform the Legislature about an important investment that furthers the McGuinty government's support for youth entrepreneurship in Ontario. How we encourage and support our young entrepreneurs will determine the future success of our economy in the global marketplace. It is important that we develop partnerships with organizations that help young entrepreneurs start businesses and help them become and stay competitive.

1400

I am pleased to inform the Legislature that the McGuinty government has provided the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, known as CYBF, with \$2.2 million to aid entrepreneurial development in the province.

I had the pleasure of making this announcement last Thursday at Helicopter Company Inc. This company is Toronto's only helicopter operation dedicated to tourism, and it employs over 30 hard-working staff members. Its rise to prosperity is a success story in every sense.

In 1999, CYBF helped the company get off the ground. The foundation provided co-founders Julia Henderson and Kevin Smith with financing and mentorship, the critical boost they needed to start their business at that point in time.

Year after year, the foundation provides young entrepreneurs like Julia and Kevin with the fundamental tools they need to succeed. These kinds of initiatives and assistance make a positive difference across Ontario.

This \$2.2 million in funding makes the McGuinty government the foundation's main provincial funding partner. I am very proud of this investment, and I look forward to working with the foundation to foster youth entrepreneurship for many years to come.

Our work with CYBF is just one example of what the McGuinty government is doing to foster an entrepreneurial spirit among Ontario's youth.

We have worked hard to stimulate and support an entrepreneurial climate among the young people of this province. Let me just give you a few examples.

The Ontario Secondary School Business Plan Competition and the Summer Company program provide the

future leaders of Ontario with an understanding of enterprise and entrepreneurship at an early age.

In addition to these existing programs, we are launching Global Edge, an exciting new program that gives post-secondary students international work experience, in partnership with some of the world's most successful and innovative companies. Fourteen young Ontarians will be placed in summer jobs around the world with companies such as DaimlerChrysler in Germany, ICICI Bank in the UK, Tata in India, Bombardier in Mexico, and Aecon in Ecuador. This exciting new program will give participants a global perspective on business and give them the knowledge of what it takes to be successful in the marketplace. I'm sure it will be a learning experience that they will never forget. I can tell you that I'm very proud of this new program.

Encouraging young women to reach for their dreams and supporting them with good programs and useful resources is also a priority for our government.

In February, we hosted our first-ever Young Women Entrepreneurs Conference. This allowed young women to have the opportunity to learn from established businesswomen. Julia Henderson, co-founder of Helicopter Company Inc.; Michelle Planche, president of Paradigm Events; Erin Zagar, founder of EZDimensions; and Neena Kanwar of KMH were among the notable women who spoke at the conference. I know their stories inspired many young women who were in the audience that day.

We are committed to helping young entrepreneurs develop the skills they need to succeed. Our programs develop bright young minds, promote partnerships and provide positive support that makes a difference for up-and-coming entrepreneurs.

I am confident that our partnership with the Canadian Youth Business Foundation and the programs my ministry offers will contribute to many more small business success stories in 2007.

Small businesses account for 97% of businesses in Ontario and generate the majority of jobs. Making sure they succeed is essential.

This is an important task, and I look forward to sharing with you, in the weeks ahead, more information about my ministry's many new initiatives and programs. These initiatives will make major strides toward promoting and supporting our entrepreneurs and keeping Ontario a great place to conduct business.

LEADING GIRLS, BUILDING COMMUNITIES AWARD

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): Before we begin, we need to take a moment to recognize our Canadian women's hockey team who became world champions last night in a 5-1 victory against the United States of America as the finalists in Winnipeg. Congratulations to our Canadian hockey team for winning. We're very proud of them.

As minister responsible for women's issues, it's been a great day. It's my privilege to meet a great many of the remarkable women and girls who live and thrive in our province. They contribute so much. Women lead organizations and excel in every occupation. They teach and inspire, they embrace challenges and overcome obstacles with confidence and creativity, and they are the heart of their families and the soul of their communities.

Last year, our government created the Leading Women, Building Communities Award to honour women for their exceptional community leadership. Last month, our government introduced the Leading Girls, Building Communities Award to recognize extraordinary young women who demonstrate great leadership and contribute so much to Ontario. These girls are championing issues in their schools and communities. Immersed in volunteerism, charitable work and social issues, they are role models, coaches and mentors to children and youth. And they are leaders for tomorrow.

Earlier today I had the pleasure of awarding three girls with Ontario's first-ever Leading Girls, Building Communities Award. They are accomplished young women with outstanding achievements. We're honoured that they're in the gallery today, and I hope you'll help me honour them.

Sarah Dell, thank you so much for being here today. Sarah is from Toronto, and receives our award for her volunteer efforts. Sarah has taken on key public roles as a volunteer, including serving as founder and co-host of the Easter Seals scholarship program and as provincial ambassador for Easter Seals. She has generously donated her time and energy on behalf of children and students with disabilities. Thank you so much for coming here today.

Nicole Turner wasn't able to be with us in the House today because she was off doing more work with Kiwanis. She was unable to stay for the session. Nicole is from London, where she makes an exemplary contribution as a peer facilitator. Nicole is active in fighting violence against women and in advocating on behalf of girls with physical disabilities. She is working hard to build a safe, equal society for girls and young women today. Thank you so much, Nicole from London. We are very proud of you.

Jenna Lambert, thank you for being here today. Some of you may remember Jenna's smiling face from the newspapers last summer, when she became the first female with a physical disability to swim Lake Ontario.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): That's an awesome feat, man—awesome.

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Our Health Minister said, "That's an awesome feat."

Jenna says, "Nothing is impossible if you believe in yourself," and she's right.

Jenna also raised more than \$170,000 through her swim for a new swimming pool for children with disabilities at the Kingston Family YMCA.

What a proud day this is for us in the House. Sarah, Nicole and Jenna, you are an inspiration to other young women across your communities and across all of Ontario. We look forward to hearing more from each of you as you continue being such extraordinary women leaders.

Please join me in congratulating all three of our award winners. Thank you so much.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Statements by the ministry? Responses?

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES STRATEGY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): I just want to congratulate those girls. It was very inspiring to listen.

On behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, I'd like to respond to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who has recently been on a rampage of feel-good announcements, though I'm going to note that each announcement has achieved very few results.

Summer job placements for Ontario's youth have been around for some time. While this is a noble idea, it is hardly a feather in the cap of the McGuinty Liberals. In fact, as we watch jobs disappearing in rural Ontario and young people moving away from their communities, I'd like to point out that little has been done in the way of incentives to encourage young people in rural Ontario to stay and work near their homes.

1410

In addition, she has made announcements on children's mental health, and while the funding increases are a start, experts in the field will tell you that her one-off announcements will only delay inevitable layoffs of key mental health workers in Ontario if she is unable to persuade her cabinet colleagues to increase funding so it's sustainable.

She also decided to get ahead of what would have been expected to be a damning indictment by the Ombudsman for her reluctance to support children and youth of military families who are suffering with mental health needs. You'll remember that she claimed the funding shortfall at Phoenix Centre in Petawawa was the federal government's problem and callously passed the buck. But when it became clear that this government couldn't afford another CAS scandal, another Caledonia or another Lottogate, she had to backtrack, and thankfully so, because these kids deserve the treatment that they need.

Finally, this minister has raised in this House the Ontario child benefit, which, as we discussed a few weeks back, means simply that the poor get a pittance under the guise of a grand new scheme. Of course, those children and families living under stressful circumstances will receive a \$250 down payment cheque from the McGuinty Liberals during the pre-writ of this election campaign, but what is particularly sad is that the full program will not take effect until two elections down the road.

Children and youth in Ontario deserve more than phony window dressing, they deserve more than feel-good announcements and they deserve more than smoke

and mirrors. They deserve better, and they deserve real results for the real issues that they have to face, not just a novelty cheque tour which she's embarked upon.

YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): On behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, I'd like to respond to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

Last month, another 5,100 manufacturing jobs were lost in Ontario; this from a government that raised small business taxes by 38%. What did you expect, really? The first increase in taxes on small business in 14 years. Small business taxes have been going down for 14 years, creating jobs and economic opportunity.

You have increased fuel costs, input costs and electricity costs. You've hiked hydro rates by over 30%. All small businesses are always over the 1,000-kilowatt-hours-per-month threshold, and yet this is another broken promise. You promised you would not do it, and you did it again.

You increased property taxes. You raised business property taxes by lifting the hard cap on business property taxes, something you said you wouldn't do—yet another broken promise.

You've increased the cost of labour. You've allowed WSIB premiums to continue to increase while this board operates under a cloud of accusations of mismanagement while the unfunded liability again starts to rise.

From the budget just two weeks ago, Ontario's economy continues to suffer under Dalton McGuinty's leadership. In 2007, the Ministry of Finance has reduced their forecast on every major economic indicator—

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): That's baloney, sheer baloney.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): **The Speaker:** I will ask the Minister of Labour to withdraw.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I withdraw. I was telling the member to remember to tell the truth.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade will come to order, and the government House leader will come to order.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to advise the Minister of Labour that I've heard that the defibrillator in the hall is out for repairs—

The Speaker: Sit down. We need to have a level of decorum in this place, and that includes using points of order for what are clearly points of order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Points of order are not matters of debate. There's a place for that. The member for Halton is presently trying to debate.

The member for Halton.

Mr. Chudleigh: Apparently, I'm very trying.

The Ontario economy continues to suffer. Just two weeks ago in the budget, the Ministry of Finance had to

reduce their forecasts on every key economic indicator, from GDP income growth to job creation and corporate profits. Ontario is now last among Canadian provinces in GDP growth and no longer the economic engine of this wonderful country. Is it any wonder that jobs are leaving Ontario in droves as businesses choose to locate in other jurisdictions?

LEADING GIRLS, BUILDING COMMUNITIES AWARD

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to Sarah Dell, Nicole Turner and Jenna Lambert on their remarkable achievements. These three accomplished individuals are indeed proven leaders in their communities and I wish to commend them on their unique initiatives. I'm proud to see that—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Responses?

YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): I'm responding to the Minister of Small Business on behalf of the New Democratic Party of Ontario.

If the McGuinty government really wants to help young entrepreneurs, there are two steps it would take immediately. First, they would freeze post-secondary tuition fees because our students are burdened more than anybody else with that, and going forward as young entrepreneurs they need to be freed from that onerous burden. And number two, they would actually reform the business education tax—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. I will not warn the Minister of Economic Development and Trade again. It is necessary that all members are able to hear the contributions of the members who legitimately have the floor.

Ms. DiNovo: Here is what Jesse Greener of the Canadian Federation of Students says: "McGuinty has tried to define himself as the 'education Premier' but all voters have seen is a trail of broken promises."

The second step they would take right away is to reform the business education tax to help small business. They're doing nothing for small business. Here is what TABIA, the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas, says:

"Budget Fails Toronto Small Business....

"The provincial government taxes Toronto's commercial property to the hilt, with education levies that it uses elsewhere in the province."

So two moves that this government could do and they do not do: One is to freeze post-secondary tuition and the second is to actually help small business in this community.

LEADING GIRLS, BUILDING COMMUNITIES AWARD

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I want to start by adding my congratulations to the success of the two young women who are here—Sarah Dell and Jenna Lambert—as well as Nicole Turner in their accomplishments and the wonderful contributions they've made to their own communities and to us as a whole.

The minister talked about the fact that it's a great day for them, and it certainly is. But it's not such a great day on the campus of the university that that member comes from when we know that women, young women particularly, are being mocked, that their perspectives as feminists are being made fun of, that sexual assault against them is being made into cartoons on the campus. In fact, it's ironic that the very young woman who is being spoofed in the Western university campus newspaper is a young woman who was here in this Legislature with the Miss G₂ Project. Her name is Jenna Owsianik. You'll know that the Miss G₂ Project has been here several times trying to get women's studies and women's issues included in secondary education curriculum. That would be one way that we could, on a continuous and ongoing basis, acknowledge and recognize the contributions that women make to our communities and have made to our communities throughout history, not only for young women but for young men as well. This is one of the ways we can start valuing the contributions of young women in a much broader way.

I hope that the minister responsible for women's issues will speak to the minister responsible for education, who is also a woman, and perhaps we can get this happening in our secondary schools. I think it would be a great honour to put women in the spotlight on a day-to-day basis in our educational institutions.

1420

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES STRATEGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): In regard to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, I certainly want to say that the expansion is long awaited, because we all know that as programs were starting up here in Toronto, concerns and problems around violence were spreading out to other communities as a result. I only hope that as the minister went around the province announcing expansion, she announced a heck of a lot more than she announced in my community, which was some 11 positions for youth to partner with police services. From my perspective, 11 positions for youth are simply not going to make much of an impact at all. So although the expansion is welcome, I suspect that many would feel it falls far short. If we really want to deal with some of the ongoing challenges that are facing children and youth, we need to recognize that many of the youth who are coming from low-income families cannot wait another five years for their families to have the increase in the child benefit that this government is waiting

another five years to implement. In other words, while this government is saying, on one hand, "We want to help our children," on the other they're saying to their parents, "But we're happy to keep you in poverty for another five years." Somehow it doesn't quite add up.

Whether it's the child benefit, the end of the clawback or the minimum wage, the bottom line is that challenged kids come from challenged family environments and we need to get at that issue, and this government has failed miserably in that regard.

I also want to make one comment on the issue of the website. This government thinks that websites are a solution to every problem. Well, I've got to tell you: If you're coming from a family that has significant income problems and challenges, it's not very likely that you're going to have a PC and it's not very likely that you're going to have a connection to the Internet. You can talk about websites that connect kids all you want, but the bottom line is that we all know it's grassroots programs and efforts at getting their families out of poverty that are going to make the best results for children in this province.

VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Speaker: I would like to welcome my constituent, Mrs. Carol Patton, and her daughter Ashley Patton, who is finishing her last year of high school at Country Day School in King. We're also proud to say that Ashley was a recipient of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award last year. Please welcome them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): In the absence of others, I guess we will look to the Deputy Premier for our regular diet of non-answers. This deals with the Lottogate scandal.

Deputy Premier, since March 26, the official opposition has asked 107 questions about the scandal surrounding the lottery corporation in Ontario—107 questions and zero answers about who knew what, when they knew it and what they did about it. The minister responsible for lotteries and your government colleagues have taken every opportunity to dodge and deflect, dither and deny.

One year ago today, an e-mail was sent to officials in the minister's office, including his chief of staff, advising that the CBC was looking into the scandal. Deputy Premier, please tell us what happened when the minister was advised of this e-mail?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Firstly, I

want to say to the honourable member that looking for diet advice from me is probably a bit unhelpful at this time.

On the issue at hand, I do think that a lot of the information that people would like to know about is actually, perhaps, in the knowledge bank of the member who sits directly to his left.

One of the things that I think has been very interesting to people is that over the course of these very, very many questions, those which have remained unanswered have got a lot to do with what happened on July 5, 2001. One of the things the Conservatives seem to have worked hard to make people unaware of or forget about is the fact that the whole Edmonds circumstance began on the watch of that party while in government. Accordingly, instead of asking all the questions to a government that has put forward its action plan and been working vigorously, perhaps the honourable member would serve us all well by providing us with some information about how this whole Edmonds affair began by talking to his seatmate.

Mr. Runciman: I'm not looking for diet advice; I'm looking for some meaningful answers to important questions.

The tally is now 108 questions, and the answers are, again, zero. This government's insistence on dodging, deflecting, dithering and denying at every turn is unacceptable to lottery-playing Ontarians who want to know that their government did everything in its power to protect the integrity of our lottery system. Will the Deputy Premier confirm for us whether or not his colleague was involved in any conversations with anybody in the Premier's office or the OLGC with respect to the lottery scandal between April 11, 2006, and October 15, 2006?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The question I placed to the honourable member remains unanswered, and I think a lot of people want to know how it is that all of this focus comes on a circumstance about Mr. Edmonds, when at the heart of it, more than two years before our party enjoyed the privilege of governing, the seatmate of the person who is asking the question was the person in charge. So at the root of this—and it's referenced many times in the report of the Ombudsman. There are circumstances, indeed, that date to 1993, and questions could be asked.

But our strategy is clear and it's on behalf of those people who invest their dollar or invest their two dollars. It is to work vigorously to address on point the challenges that have been brought forward by the KPMG work and also that of the Ombudsman. That work remains apace, and the people in the province of Ontario know that we're dedicating ourselves to the necessary action to give them even greater confidence in Ontario Lottery and Gaming.

Mr. Runciman: There's no question the government strategy is clear: Dodge, deflect and cover up. That's essentially their strategy.

The minister continues to talk about the former government. I'll tell you, this member and other members of this caucus are not afraid to have a public hearing, which

obviously can look back at past governments' actions or lack of same. We're not afraid to take that look. You're the people, you're the government, who are afraid to take a look, to have a committee of this Legislature take a look at what happened going back a number of years, but including the involvement of your minister responsible, his staff, the Premier's office and your political advisers. Will you today agree to have a committee of this Legislature look into this scandal, the involvement of your minister, your Premier and previous governments?

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Sorry about that, apple crisp.

To the honourable member, he said we want to take a look at the situation. A good, hard look has been taken. It's well informed in a document called *A Game of Trust*, a very substantial report that, along with the work of KPMG, has informed our actions. We're all interested in ensuring that the lottery-playing people of Ontario have confidence in the system. There seems to be a good bit of evidence that they do by the number of people who are playing—record numbers of people.

But the point is, the work has been done. The look has been taken and the work goes on apace, and a very, very vigorous pace indeed, to ensure that we address on point all of those recommendations that have come forward. Many are already addressed, and we will continue to ensure that the people of the province of Ontario can have the confidence they need in the OLG.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Now 110 questions asked; zero answers. Perhaps the Deputy Premier can shed some light on the late August 2006 meeting that was held to discuss the lottery scandal. We've heard that Wilson Lee, the current chief of staff to the minister responsible for lotteries, attended that meeting. Wilson Lee contradicted a statement coming out of the Premier's office saying that there was no recollection of a meeting. Shades of Gomery.

Will the Deputy Premier please advise this House whether or not he, the Premier or the minister responsible for lotteries was aware of that meeting?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I now have a chance of asking another member of the cabinet of the past government: When Mr. Edmonds's circumstance arose in 2001, what was known of it and what was done about it?

The point is that it's not surprising—these people too have had the privilege of governing. When someone like *The Fifth Estate* is involved in doing an exposé, of course the machinery responds. This is appropriate. Subsequently, a big light has been shone on the OLG and we've learned lots about things that have gone on for too long and must be done better to give greater confidence to the people of the province of Ontario. We've learned that from the good work of the Ombudsman and from KPMG. Accordingly, we're using all the energy that we have to dedicate ourselves to the task, which is what the people of the province of Ontario want to know, which is

that when they put down that buck or two, when they're engaged in something that is about hope and about their dreams, they have a fair chance. We're working very vigorously to give them ever-increasing confidence on a daily basis.

1430

Mr. Klees: Now 111 questions and zero answers. The people observing this question period must begin to wonder, what is it that the government is hiding? We simply cannot accept the assertion that this scandal was mushrooming under this government's watch and the minister responsible knew nothing about it. This constant dodging, ducking, dithering and denying is starting to send a message, not only to this House but to people across this province. Does the Deputy Premier expect us and the public to believe that a chief of staff, a senior adviser to the minister, attended a meeting and the minister responsible knew nothing about it? Does the Deputy Premier really expect us and the public to believe that?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: What we know and what we're getting ever better evidence around is that the people of the province of Ontario have a tremendous capacity to draw their conclusions and to make judgments. We must look to the number of people who are playing the lotteries themselves as one form—so the expression goes, "People vote with their feet." As best I know, record numbers of people are involving themselves in the opportunity to invest a dollar or two in their dreams and in their hopes and perhaps in their aspirations.

Accordingly, the honourable member likes to talk about vegetables, but the reality is that if he wants to look at where this whole circumstance was mushrooming, instead of looking over this way, he need merely go down to the end and talk to his friend who was the responsible minister at that time. We've learned about circumstances. The big light has been shone and we are action-oriented to address these circumstances point on point on point.

Mr. Klees: Mr. Speaker, 112 questions and zero answers—all the more evidence why it's important that this House have an opportunity to get some answers. We need to know what the minister responsible and the Premier knew, when they knew it, what they knew about this situation. I would ask that the Deputy Premier stand in his place and answer this one question: Why do you object to a committee of this Legislature reviewing that information? What are you hiding? What is the government hiding? Why do you not want that examination by a committee of this Legislature?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: It seems rather counter-productive, when you've had reports, when you're in the midst of using your energy to move forward in a fashion that addresses these wrongs that have been ongoing for too long—and they want to stop the process. They want to go back for the purposes of some political show and tell on the offer that the former minister is going to come clean with all that he knows. This is the offer that they made. He's obligated to do so. The opportunity is available.

We've had a report from the Ombudsman, we've had a report from KPMG, and we're working on a diligent basis every single day to ensure that the lottery-playing public in Ontario has every confidence that their dollar invested is giving them a fair shot at their hopes and their dreams and their aspirations coming to life. We think that there's a good measure of progress reflected in the confidence that the people are expressing by ever record numbers of people playing lotteries in the province.

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): This question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, across Ontario people are increasingly concerned about global warming, about the kind of environment we're leaving for our children and our grandchildren. What's clear is that the McGuinty government must set meaningful targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions. My question is this: Will the McGuinty government set Ontario's target for greenhouse gas emission reductions at the levels required under the Kyoto accord by the year 2012?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm pleased to have a chance to hear from the leader of the third party with respect to this important issue, because it seems like it is a new topic for him. I think that was reflected at the press conference that he had today. He knows full well that a member of his caucus, the member for Timmins–James Bay, has brought forward an act, a private member's bill, that will be debated this Thursday, and in this House we'll have the opportunity to talk about what may be their plan with respect to climate change. But I can tell the leader of the third party that I have been working to develop a comprehensive plan for this province to build on the groundwork that we have laid since 2003. We look forward to building on the successes that we've had to date with respect to the plan to close coal, our greenbelt strategy and historic investments in public transit. We will have a real and meaningful plan and not play political partisanship with such an important issue to Ontarians.

Mr. Hampton: The question is very clear: Is the McGuinty government going to set targets according to the Kyoto accord or are you not? You have a record of inaction. What you've got is four years of inaction on this file. So the question remains the same. Kyoto is the internationally recognized standard by which all climate change plans are judged, and either the McGuinty government supports the Kyoto accord or you don't. The question is: Is the McGuinty government going to support the Kyoto accord or are you not going to support the Kyoto accord?

Hon. Ms. Broten: Perhaps my friend has been absent for a number of years as we talked about the historic and important issue of climate change. Myself and Minister Cansfield, then Minister of Energy, were at the MOP/COP meetings in Montreal, the historic continuation of those climate change discussions. We have par-

ticipated in those discussions, and we are a government that has committed to and supports Canada's meeting its international obligations under the Kyoto agreement. We've said that in this House before; we'll say it again. We are doing our part in Ontario. We are committed to phasing out our coal, we have protected a historic greenbelt, we have made historic investments in public transit and, unlike you, sir, we believe in building public transit and we believe in the importance of expanding a subway in this city of Toronto to make sure that commuters can get from the north into the south.

In your next question, I look forward to having a chance to talk to you about some of the many other—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: I still didn't hear this magic word. We hear a lot of discussion, and we know that the McGuinty government is good at discussion. We've seen a lot of photo ops, and we know the McGuinty government is good at photo ops. But the question is, are you going to set greenhouse gas emission reduction targets according to the requirements of the Kyoto accord or not? Which is it, Minister? Does the McGuinty government support the Kyoto accord? Are you going to set emission reduction requirements according to the Kyoto accord or not? Where is the McGuinty government on the Kyoto accord?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I guess I will say to my friend again that this government is committed to helping Canada meet its obligations under that international agreement. We have said that for a number of years and we are one of the provincial governments that is taking real and concrete action. Unlike you, if you take a look at the climate change plan you propose to put before this House tomorrow, we are not going to do Canada's obligations on the back of Ontario and let Alberta have a free ride. The last time I checked, Kenora–Rainy River wasn't in Alberta. I'm fighting for Ontario. We believe in cap and trade and ratchet down, and we will continue to take significant steps with respect to meeting our commitments here in Ontario.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Minister of the Environment: I take it, then, that the McGuinty government wants to adopt something akin to Alberta. If that's the case, then you are way off the Kyoto accord. Look, Minister, you can't weave and duck and dodge on this.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We need to have a sense of decorum in here. I would appreciate the Minister of Energy and government House leader respecting that decorum and respecting other members. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: The climate change act that we have put forward would set targets according to the Kyoto accord by 2012. It would also make the environment commissioner a climate change watchdog with the power and resources to hold the government accountable if it fails to meet the Kyoto targets. So my question is even

more straightforward, Minister: Will you and your Premier be voting in favour of the Ontario Climate Change Act? Will you be setting targets in compliance with Kyoto or not?

1440

Hon. Ms. Broten: I would suggest that my friend read the act that he proposes to debate in this House tomorrow, because that act excludes action with respect to the forestry sector, somewhat like the work being done by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Our climate change plan, I can assure you, will take action and will ensure that there's a role for our forestry sector in carbon management here in Ontario. We take that very seriously, and we will take action.

Again, I suggest to you that you should read the act, because your subsection 3(3) states that if Canada does not meet its Kyoto obligations—and who does that mean? Alberta—by 2012, Ontario must further reduce its emissions due to the failure of the other provinces. Let me tell you, sir, I'm taking action here in Ontario. We will do the work that we need to do. We will set out a comprehensive plan that makes sense for Ontario and helps Canada meet its international obligations.

Mr. Hampton: We know that the McGuinty government is very good at holding phony photo ops with respect to the environment, but I didn't know your reading skills were deficient as well. Minister, the question is this: Is the McGuinty government going to set realistic targets for greenhouse gas emissions for Ontario which comply with the Kyoto accord or not? In terms of you and your Premier, are you going to vote for the climate change act which we have introduced, which will set Kyoto as the target, or are you going to vote against it? Which is it, Minister?

Hon. Ms. Broten: Ontario will continue to take a leadership role in this country with respect to helping Canada meet its international obligations under the Kyoto Protocol. We will not have a made-in-Alberta solution; we will not have a made-in-Texas solution. We have been straight and consistent with respect to our goal of capping and ratcheting down based on real targets. That is the way you fight climate change. That is the way you break the back of carbon and you reduce your CO₂ emissions.

Let me tell you about some of the announcements that you describe as photo ops that we have made. We have protected 1.8 million acres of greenbelt. We have contracts in place for 18 projects representing 1,300 megawatts of renewable power. We have invested \$838 million to expand and modernize public transit in the GTA. And we will support investments in public transit, such as the York subway, that you do not.

Mr. Hampton: And virtually everything you talk about amounts to nothing more than promises to someday, perhaps, maybe take future action. That's the problem with the McGuinty government. You sign on to an American accord, which is not even Kyoto lite, and want to pass that off as somehow meeting the Kyoto requirements.

My question, again, is this: You're going to vote on this. Other members of the McGuinty government are going to vote on this. Are you going to vote to set Ontario's greenhouse gas emission targets according to the Kyoto accord or not, Minister? What's it going to be? You can't keep talking and doing nothing on a continuing basis. Are you in favour of Kyoto? Are you going to set Kyoto targets, or are you going to try to continue to spin the line?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I'm going to suggest that my friend pay closer attention to the actions being taken by our government, because last week, when we made our announcement that we would be undertaking discussions with American states that are taking leadership with respect to climate change, such as Governor Schwarzenegger, such as Governor Spitzer, I can tell you, sir, that I don't think Ontarians and folks around the world who know about this topic think that those individuals are not taking real action with respect to climate change. They have put in place a regime that has received accolades from the David Suzuki Foundation and the Pollution Probe executive director. Let me tell you, I would prefer to take action that is receiving accolades from those two individuals than from you.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Deputy Premier, and it's on the lottery scandal issue. Minister, you are well aware now that we've had 113 questions, and we still have zero answers. The dodging, deflecting, dithering and denying continues, but the people of Ontario deserve better, and you know that.

We have established that the minister was aware, and does not deny, that meetings did occur in late August 2006. Perhaps the minister would tell the House today who attended those meetings and what was discussed.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's good to have the opportunity to have another member of the former government on record, standing in his place, taking absolutely no responsibility for a circumstance relating to Mr. Edmonds that happened on his party's watch.

We've taken very seriously the responsibility for ensuring that the confidence of the people of Ontario who are investing that dollar or two a week in the lottery is appropriately placed. And the evidence is that they're doing that in good numbers. I would assert that perhaps this is, in part, because we've taken so seriously the advice that came from KPMG and from the Ombudsman himself. We'll continue apace to implement all the recommendations that are there and continue to give confidence to the lottery-playing public of the province of Ontario.

Mr. O'Toole: Now we have 114 questions and still zero answers. The stonewalling and the covering up are the reasons why we want this matter referred to a stand-

ing committee of the Legislature for review. We need to have a process where we can get the answers required to restore the confidence and indeed the integrity of the lottery system.

Deputy Premier, if there is no cover-up and there's nothing you have to hide, and if this government is truly interested in transparency and accountability, then you will support our call to refer this whole affair to a standing committee. Will the minister support this motion in this House today? We're looking forward to an answer.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I too am looking forward to an answer. I want to know very badly why it is that the honourable member who sits in the front row remains silent on the circumstances associated with his very ministerial responsibility.

We have a good bit of information. The Ombudsman has investigated the circumstances rather thoroughly and, along with KPMG, has given very particular advice about the steps that should be taken, and we're taking those steps. In fact, they don't want to hear the quote, because they've heard it a lot, about the progress that was already in place—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): I want to hear it.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I don't have it at hand.

Subsequently, we're going to continue to pound away and to address the challenges that have been brought to everyone's attention in a very transparent fashion.

If the honourable members, in their conscience, have some recollection of the things they did or didn't do in government, then they should clear their conscience and let everybody know.

CITY OF TORONTO

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): In the absence of the finance minister, my question is to the Deputy Premier. Today, the Minister of Finance was to meet with the city of Toronto's budget chief, Shelley Carroll, for what your officials describe as a listening exercise. What Toronto needs is not a listening exercise, but a government that is willing to take some action. Toronto needs the finance minister to step up to the plate now so the city can provide badly needed light rail transit expansions, improve access to child care and recreation, and provide all the services for which it is responsible without the ignominy of having to raise taxes. Why have you and your government chosen to run a surplus budget for the province and let the city of Toronto do without?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): First off, it should come as absolutely no surprise to anyone in the province of Ontario that the NDP is against the idea that a government should have its books in balance. It's striking that in this place, after their failed five years, some in their party got it and left—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Yes, Bob got it. He's not stuck where you're stuck, which is in the idea that deficits are the norm. We believe fundamentally in a balanced budget. We're proud to be taking the steps to get there.

Along the way, the city of Toronto has received not only incredible respect and an acknowledgement of the crucial role they play as our province's capital, they have received new tools in the form of the City of Toronto Act, and they have received copious amounts of new resources from our government each and every year.

I represent Toronto, and I am very, very proud of the work that we've done. I'm proud as well, of course, that the finance minister continues to work with our partners at the city of Toronto to enhance the quality of life and opportunity in this fantastic city.

1450

Mr. Prue: Mr. Deputy Premier, the only way that you were able to balance your budget was on the backs of the municipalities of this province. Toronto council has laboured over its shortfall throughout your government's entire mandate. You have bills to pay. You promised to fix the download of provincial services onto our cities because you said it was unfair, and you have singularly failed to do so. When will you start to pay your bills and relieve Toronto's hard-working property taxpayers of the burden of the \$71 million that your government owes to them?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Let's just take a look at the facts and let's see what the city of Toronto has received from the province of Ontario this year alone: \$26.7 million in housing funding; \$222 million in TTC capital infrastructure; \$200 million for TTC fleet modernization; in Ontario municipal partnership funding, OMPF, money they never received before, \$79.4 million; \$161 million in gas tax money, which they never received before this government came into office either; \$200 million for TTC subway operations; \$150 million for TTC vehicle replacement.

We believe in the city of Toronto. We're investing in the city of Toronto like no other government has done before, but they've got their own revenue tools as well. They should be looking at them the way they have, and that way, the city of Toronto can remain a viable—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

VIOLENCE FAMILIALE

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. First off, I'd like to join you in commending the first winners of the Leading Girls, Building Communities Award. It's great to see our government rewarding such outstanding young women for their wonderful achievements in

promoting social change in their communities. It's also really great to have them here with us in the House today.

As we talk about their success and the success of our women's hockey team, I also want to bring to your attention and to the attention of those in the House the issue of other women in our community, women in my riding, but all across Ontario, who are suffering from domestic violence. This is a problem that I feel we must continue to work to prevent if Ontario is to be a safe and inviting place for women to work and live.

I know that much of the problem with domestic violence is that the signs of abuse go unnoticed by the people closest to the victims, whether they be neighbours, friends or even family members. Even more troubling is that even when the abuse is outwardly evident, many of those who are witness to it do not know what they can do to help the victim.

Minister, like other members in this Legislature, I would like to be able to instruct my constituents on what they can do if they suspect abuse is happening. I—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Minister.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): I applaud the member from Nipissing for her interest in this matter. What is of great concern to us is that we move in the area of training, and that is training for all people on the front lines to help us identify when domestic violence may be going on.

One of the areas of training that is brand new to the government is assisting friends, neighbours and families in identifying signs of domestic violence. To that end, we have actually launched a program around neighbours, friends and families. They can come to a website and they can get hold of pamphlets. The pamphlets are actually written in 14 different languages already. There are public service announcements already. This campaign is being launched in 70 different communities so far, with more communities signing on all the time. We're very pleased to see such a great take-up on this. It's information that neighbours, friends and families need to know.

M^{me} Smith: Je sais que le gouvernement McGuinty s'est engagé à plusieurs reprises de bien représenter la population francophone de l'Ontario. Nous avons non seulement accordé l'autonomie à TFO, mais nous nous sommes engagés à doubler la grandeur de l'hôpital Montfort. Nous avons aussi entendu parler aujourd'hui des bienfaits du nouveau Commissariat aux services en français proposé dans le budget.

Mais je me demande, en plus du financement et des programmes en place pour les femmes violentées dont nous venons d'entendre parler, qu'en est-il des services aux femmes francophones qui cherchent désespérément à s'échapper à la violence? Qu'avons-nous en place pour aider ces femmes et pour subvenir à leurs besoins uniques?

L'hon. M^{me} Pupatello: La ministre des Services sociaux, s'il vous plaît.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Moi aussi, je voudrais féliciter M^{me} Smith de la circonscription de Nipissing pour son engagement envers les femmes qui sont en situation de violence. La violence faite aux femmes est une problématique humaine et sociale qui nous interpelle tous.

C'est pour cette raison que dans le cadre de la mise en œuvre du plan d'action contre la violence familiale, le gouvernement McGuinty s'est engagé à améliorer l'accès aux services en français d'intervention en situation de crise. Nous avons fait des investissements ciblés de l'ordre de 3,5 \$ millions, dont 2,5 \$ millions représentent du financement de base. Par exemple, nous avons aidé au financement pour que les femmes aient un seul numéro de téléphone sans frais, 1-877-FEMAIDE, permettant aux femmes francophones victimes de violence provenant de n'importe où en province de composer un seul numéro de téléphone pour recevoir du soutien et obtenir de l'information sur les services disponibles en français dans leur communauté.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean-Carleton): This is for the Deputy Premier—115 questions, zero responses.

There was a meeting on October 29, 2006, that was attended by top Liberal fixers Don Guy, Warren Kinsella, Bob Lopinski and Jim Warren. Media reports indicate that this meeting was held for the purposes of trying to spin the scandal. Rather than trying to fix the problem, it seems they tried to cover it up. This is not the action that Ontarians want or expect from their government, not when it comes to lottery tickets and their chance at the million. Will the Deputy Premier please tell us why the first instinct of his government was to cover this up rather than clean it up?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thought that the early part of the member's question was interesting, because it said "media reports." She's depending upon something that is not verified. But then she used the words "fix the problem," so here's the way I figure it: KPMG did a body of work and came back with an action plan. Subsequently, the Ombudsman did a very exhaustive investigative look at the circumstances. He indicated that those circumstances had been ongoing for more than a decade, traced back over a long period of time. As a government, through the leadership of the minister and the leadership at OLG, we've been driving forward on the changes that have been recommended.

If anyone comes up to me on the street—and, by the way, I walk back and forth to work and the like and nobody has—I'd clearly say to them that we got a report. The report showed us—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm indeed very approachable. You're not very nice today.

But I'd just let them know that the report came back and said there's a bunch of stuff that needs to be done, and I'd let them know that we're bringing all the vigour in the world to get all of that done as fast as possible.

Ms. MacLeod: We all know the refrain by now: 116 questions and how many responses?

Interjections: Zero.

Ms. MacLeod: Zero. Dodge and deflect, dither and deny. This is why we need a standing committee of this Legislature to look into this matter so we can get the real answers without the stonewalling we're getting today and we've gotten every day for the past two weeks. If there's nothing to hide, if they did everything properly, if their first response came up in April of last year, if their instinct was to clean this scandal up rather than cover it up, there should be no problem with a committee investigation into what the minister's office knew and what the Premier's office knew and what they did about it.

So I'm going to ask it again: Will the Deputy Premier support our call for an investigation?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: As I've had the chance to say to many of the member's colleagues, I don't know what the member from Erie-Lincoln knows. She should ask him. If he's got anything that would be of benefit for everybody else to know, he should let them know.

The point is, the Ombudsman—the great, big, shiny light—went in there, took a good, hard look at the circumstances, developed an action plan, said he sees good results to date and encouraged us to move forward, and indeed we have, to restore the confidence of the lottery-playing public. And they are playing in very, very high numbers. So we agree: lots of problems there. They were there over a long period of time. We've got a really good plan and we're moving forward vigorously to implement it on behalf of the people of Ontario in an accountable fashion and consistent with our responsibilities.

1500

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): In the absence of the finance minister, my question is to the Minister of Housing. Minister, we know that when it comes to affordable housing, your budget is a flimsy one. There is not a single new cent in this budget for affordable housing; it's all federal money, courtesy of the NDP's federal budget passed in 2005.

Minister, we've learned that your meagre monthly housing allowance violates the federal government's operating principles for how federal money can be spent, failing to use it to create and build new affordable housing. Minister, will you admit that your affordable housing plan does not add up?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Only the NDP can possibly say, in a budget that contains \$127 million of new housing funding to our municipal partners and \$181 million of housing allowances for 27,000 low-income-earning

families in this province, that that's not good enough. We're saying that it's a darn good start. It's going to live up to our housing commitment to create 20,000 new units of housing in this province and 35,000 housing allowances in this province.

We believe that the investments we're making to help the low-earning wage earners of this province is good for the economy and it's good for those individuals who need that housing support; 27,000 families are going to benefit from this across the province. We think that's a darn good start to deal with these issues.

Mr. Ferreira: The minister's answer, indeed, is not good enough. In fact, it's pretty thin gruel that this government is offering low-income Ontarians, who are in desperate need of real, affordable housing.

The minister dodged my question, so I'm going to quote for him an answer from the federal Minister of Finance on his half-baked plan: "The new funding is not intended to support ongoing operational funding for existing social housing stock, rent subsidies, or to replace provincial and territorial investments in affordable housing."

My question to the minister is, will he admit that even though the NDP came through in the 2005 federal budget, your government has not delivered on affordable housing in the way that it was intended?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I know this member is a new member, and the first question he should really answer for the students in his riding is why he is against the subway expansion to York University.

We believe that after many years of inactivity, both at the provincial level and the federal level, in the housing area, we have over the two and a half years since we signed the agreement with the federal government done more in housing than any other government in recent memory.

We believe that the 27,000 housing allowances that are going to help low-wage-earning parents and families in this province, as well as the \$127 million that we've given over to housing providers across this province to utilize in the best way they know how to actually deal with housing issues that may be different from community to community, is a darn good way to help low-income families. We are proud of this program, and we know that many families in this province will benefit from the program that we announced in the budget.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Ontario is the great province it is today thanks in large part to the contributions of newcomers from all over the world. The recent release of the 2006 census data indicates that the country is becoming increasingly reliant on immigration to meet population growth targets and labour market needs. In fact, over the last three years, the London area has welcomed over 7,000 newcomers and will, I trust, continue to do so.

Newcomers now account for over two thirds of Canada's population growth, and with our aging population and low birth rates, immigrants will actually keep our population from declining in the future. But most newcomers settle in only a few urban areas. What are we doing to encourage newcomers to settle outside the GTA?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I want to thank the member from London North Centre for her question. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the member from London North Centre has done some cutting-edge, widely acclaimed research on demographic trends in Ontario, so she knows what she's talking about. One of the key things we've done in our government is that we've established immigration gateways across Ontario, so we are encouraging immigrants to look at centres for settlement other than Toronto. We get enough in Toronto, but we're trying to encourage immigrants to go to London, to Windsor, to Ottawa, Sudbury and Brantford because we think those are great communities. That's why they've established international web portals in London, access centres and more program enhancement in those centres outside of Toronto, including Niagara, to attract immigrant investment, immigrant families to go to those great Ontario communities.

Ms. Matthews: Now, as Mary Williamson of the Cross Cultural Learner Centre in London indicated in the London Free Press, London wants to attract more skilled workers and people who are making choices as to where they live in the world.

You were recently in London for the launch of London's immigration portal and also the new access centre at WIL, a one-stop resource centre for immigrants and for employers. Minister, how is this access centre going to assist newcomers to come to and settle in London?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The one-stop access centre for newcomers that is now established in London is a model of the one that's already established in Toronto and the GTA on the TRIEC model. The access centre connects employers with newcomers and provides services to both so they can go to one stop and get all the information so they can follow a career or open up a business or find settlement services in London. London is a model city because Middlesex and London and the mayor, Anne Marie DeCicco-Best, are leaders in ensuring that they say to the whole world that London is a welcoming place for newcomers. They've got the services now, they have the coordination of all the different community groups, so London is the place to go if you're looking to settle in Ontario, as is Mississauga, as is Mimico, as is Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie. Come to Ontario; we want you.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Just in case any-

body has lost count, we're at 117 questions now and no answers on this lottery scandal.

Murray Campbell in the Globe and Mail last week: "It's just too patronizing for words." We know of the April 11, 2006, e-mail to the lottery minister's office. That was one year ago today. Minister Caplan said that this was just another routine FOI e-mail, there was nothing to it, that his office didn't get involved. But the Deputy Premier just a short time ago in this House said the appropriate machinery responded. Perhaps the Deputy Premier will tell us what the appropriate machinery was and how it responded one year ago, on April 11, 2006.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to comment on the fact that the opposition party today has moved a lot of their questions around, but I find it very interesting that the former minister is not amongst those who's being given the opportunity to ask the questions. Perhaps it is because he knows all the answers. But the reality is that we're enormously grateful for the leadership of our colleague the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, and the team has worked to address issues of confidence that were developed in the reports by the Ombudsman and KPMG. It indicated that there had been a pattern over a long period of time. Way more to the point, it gave us precise direction about how to move forward. We're addressing those on point, and I would say to the people of the province of Ontario that through the good leadership of the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal confidence in the lottery corporation is stronger and getting stronger each and every day.

Mr. Barrett: Well, 118 questions now, zero answers. We know they're deflecting, dithering and denying. That's why we need a committee of this Legislature. We need a committee to take a look into the flow of information between the Premier's office, the minister's office and OLGC. If there's nothing to hide, if everything is above board and there's no cover-up, there should be no problem to have an all-party standing committee of this House.

Deputy Premier, my question: Will you support our call for an all-party committee to get to the bottom of this?

1510

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The member likes the use language like "cover-up," and the thing that concerns us a lot is that we have a report from the Ombudsman that was written recently, after a very, very exhaustive bit of investigative work.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Oh, excuse me.

The problem we have is that from over there, they keep raising the spectre of a cover-up, which leads us to wonder what it was the member for Erie-Lincoln was up to. I really think that this is a matter for inside the family of that political party. They should ask those questions.

For our part, we've got a couple of reports from KPMG and the Ombudsman, and we're pounding for-

ward vigorously on implementation to ensure that confidence, which is good today, gets better each and every day, and that more people invest their dollar or two in their hopes and in their dreams.

ONTARIO ARTISTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Minister, today the Ontario Federation of Labour was here representing thousands of cultural workers in this province. They were angry about the status of the artist act you introduced, because it is completely and totally inadequate. Instead of making meaningful change for the artists in Ontario, this government has done nothing other than celebrate artists for one weekend.

When are you going to keep your promise and introduce status of the artist legislation that actually improves the lives and incomes of Ontario's artists?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to just illuminate an issue for the benefit of the Toronto members in the back row of the NDP—a quote from Mr. Howard Hampton this morning: “We don’t need another subway mega-project that might perhaps happen sometime four, five years or six years from now extending the subway line into a lightly populated York region.”

This is a very important moment to mark: that the historic position of the New Democratic Party of at least 12 or 13 years in our city has been reversed today by the member from remote northwestern Ontario. He’s against Toronto, and he’s against the idea that we have public transit that allows us to move.

On this issue of status of the artist, here’s a quote from Rosario Marchese circa 1991: “I am committed to working with the arts community and my colleagues in other ministries to develop a strong and effective status of the artist policy in Ontario.” Rosario Marchese, June 1991.

Ms. DiNovo: This is a new low across the aisle. Mr. Marchese’s—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Don’t worry, we know; we know that—

The Speaker: The government House leader.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): It’s not a new low. I wouldn’t talk about your colleagues like that.

The Speaker: The member for Ottawa Centre.

Interjections.

The Speaker: We’ll just wait.

The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. DiNovo: Yes, Mr. Speaker. All those Ontario cultural workers and artists are listening to this, and they’re going to be reading the Hansard, and this is what you haven’t done: You’ve done nothing to put into place recommendations of your own status of the artist report; you’ve done nothing to help child performers or to

address the concerns of my Bill 191; you’ve done nothing to address housing issues for artists in Ontario; and you’ve done nothing to address collective bargaining issues for artists in Ontario. All you’ve done is a weekend in June. This government should be absolutely appalled at their own inaction and the ridiculous answer we received which had nothing to do with the question.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member ought to borrow a little machine from the member in the front row. As one example, she says, “Nothing for housing for the artists.” What about the TTC Wychwood barns project that you never had the capacity to move along? Housing for people in the arts is just one small example of our dedication to artists. Community museum operating grants up; cultural renaissance; investments all across the landscape in Toronto; Ontario Heritage Act; status of the artist legislation; entertainment and creative industries; arts education, \$25 million; community libraries, \$15 million; and a 38% increase to the Ontario Arts Council.

When those artists read the Hansard and they see the hollow kinds of questions the new member is sending, they’ll understand everything about the dart from the Toronto Star that this member proudly received recently.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. New question.

WATER PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a quiet, soothing, refreshing question for the Minister of the Environment. Thanks to the Clean Water Act, we now have some of the safest and best-protected drinking water in Canada. I am still surprised that the Conservative and NDP members voted against legislation that implements 12 of the recommendations from the Walkerton inquiry.

I’d like to highlight that the Clean Water Act also protects the Great Lakes. Proximity to the Great Lakes is one of the many benefits of living in my riding of Essex. Protecting the Great Lakes is very important to my constituents, and I’m proud to be part of a government that is committed to keeping the Great Lakes for generations to come.

Minister, you recently introduced an important piece of legislation, the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario’s Water Act. How will that act benefit Ontario?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I’m very pleased to have a question that allows us to talk about the importance our government places on protecting the environment and protecting our sources of drinking water, rather than playing politics when it comes to water or the environment.

I know where the Harris-Eves-Tory party stood for many years and continues to stand today. They say that Ontario should give away its water for free. They say that water bottlers, slurry makers and other heavy consumers of water who make profits from those sales should pay nothing—nothing—for Ontario’s water. We disagree,

and our government says it's about time that industry pay its fair share to protect Ontario's most precious resource, and that is a legacy that we will be proudly leaving for generations to come.

The proposed water charges are in line with the actions taken by many other jurisdictions in North America. We are going to conserve and protect our waters in the Great Lakes and around Ontario for generations to come.

Mr. Crozier: We are all aware of the fact that 70% of Ontarians get their drinking water from the Great Lakes, and I'm pleased that you were able to explain why we are having to implement a modest water-taking charge. But I also know that you have travelled across the province, that you've met with important rural representatives in my own riding, in the riding of Chatham-Kent Essex and in others across the province, and it's clear that you have the best interests of rural Ontario at heart.

Since we're on the topic of clean, safe drinking water, would you mind clearing up some of the misconceptions out there that the members of the official opposition and the NDP caucus are perpetuating throughout rural Ontario about the important steps the McGuinty government is taking to protect drinking water in our great province?

Hon. Ms. Broten: We have a history in this province that has brought very much to light that it's not easy or inexpensive to have high standards for our drinking water. We learned those lessons from Walkerton and we've learned them from Justice O'Connor.

I have to say that I'd ask the Conservative Party, the party of John Tory, to stop fearmongering in rural Ontario. We've committed \$120 million for source protection already. Our Clean Water Act includes an Ontario drinking water stewardship program that will provide rural Ontarians with \$7 million in 2007-08 and \$21 million over the next three years to allow for outreach education and to fund early action to protect drinking water. Ron Bonnett, past president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, says, "This first-stage financial assistance goes a long way toward addressing the concerns of the farming community."

Our government is listening to rural Ontario. I'd like to reassure rural Ontarians that we are not planning on metering their private wells, and I would encourage the members of the opposition to stop scaremongering.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Deputy Premier. One hundred and nineteen questions so far and still zero answers. The dodging and deflecting, dithering and denying have got to stop. The people of Ontario need to have their faith restored that this government acted to close the barn door before the horse fled, not after. But as we've seen over the course of the last two and half weeks, over the last 119 questions, this government has refused to come clean about when it knew it and what it knew. That's why we need a committee to investigate. Will the minister agree

to refer this matter to a committee of the Legislature so we can clear up this matter once and for all?

1520

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm grateful for one more opportunity to answer this question, but somewhat disappointed that yet again it hasn't come from the member for Erie-Lincoln. He likes to talk. He likes to talk about hiding under the desk, and it seems that he's become rather expert as this issue has been around the Ontario Legislature. Perhaps—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Oh, he is here, Mr. Speaker, only not in his seat.

The Ombudsman and KPMG have given us awfully strong advice about the steps that must be taken to restore all the confidence that may have been put at risk as a result of the challenges at the OLG over a long period of time. We've made really good progress already, and we're very dedicated, on behalf of those players in the province of Ontario, to move forward on all of the recommendations. We will continue to dedicate our daily energy to building on the recommendations that have been made. We think that the big light has been exposed, and it's our responsibility to move forward as swiftly as we can to address the recommendations on point. That's what we're doing.

Mr. Miller: One hundred and twenty questions; zero answers. The minister continues to dodge and deflect, dither and deny, and the questions go unanswered.

If there's nothing to hide, if everything was above board, if when they first found out they acted to clean it up rather than cover it up, there should be no problem with an investigation into the minister's office, the Premier's office and the OLG. What are you afraid of? Why won't you act to clear the air and agree to send this matter to committee?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: That's 120 opportunities when members over there made a determination that it was better to pursue this than to offer Ontarians a piece of public policy, as an example, or to ask questions in the Legislature about matters related to health, education, the environment and circumstances for children. Those are their choices and we respect that, but our obligation is to address the information that's been made available as a result of the exhaustive work of the Ombudsman and the advice of KPMG. Everybody who's been around a long time knows—no one perhaps as well as the member from Erie-Lincoln—or has reviewed the Ombudsman's report. They know there are concerns that have been raised, and anyone who's been interested is very well aware of those. Our responsibility is to move forward, in as prompt a fashion as possible, to address on point the recommendations that were made, and we will continue to bring all of our energy dedicated to that very task.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): A question for the Deputy Premier: In the last month, the Nuclear

Waste Management Organization has said that it would accept burial of nuclear waste in sedimentary rock in southern Ontario. Can you tell us if any community in Ontario will be exempted from being an area that may be considered for the deposit of nuclear waste; for instance, London?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I know that the Minister of the Environment and others will look forward to the opportunity to address that question with the honourable member, building on past responses to it. But I would like to take the opportunity to speak to him as a Toronto member. I'm very puzzled why your party leader has today reversed a long-standing NDP policy to build a new subway line to York University and beyond to York region, and especially why your party's fascination and fixation on issues in northwestern Ontario related to employment have not mattered one little bit for the hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of workers at plants in northwestern Ontario who will be put out of work as a result of this policy reversal. Why doesn't the honourable member—a Toronto member with that weak-kneed Toronto back row—stand in his place and tell us, is he in favour of the subway line to York University and beyond to York region or does he stand with the historic policy reversal of his leader, who has abandoned the workers of northwestern Ontario?

PETITIONS

SMOKING LOUNGES

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I have a petition set up by Jack Murray from Norview Lodge to maintain smoking rooms at Norview Lodge.

"Whereas Norview Lodge constructed their new home, including two designated smoking rooms, in compliance with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care design standards, 1998;

"Whereas it would cost the county taxpayers \$60,000 to renovate the existing rooms to meet smoke-free Ontario design requirements;

"Whereas we do not feel it's safe to force residents outside to enjoy a cigarette;

"Whereas Norview Lodge becomes the home of the residents and they therefore should be afforded the opportunity to smoke in their home;

"We, the undersigned, petition the provincial government to provide for grandfathering in the legislation to allow smoking rooms that were built in compliance with the most recent design standards to remain open."

I agree with the sentiments and affix my signature.

FRAUD

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I have a petition signed by 331 people from the community of Val

Rita in regard to a particular issue within the municipality dealing with fraud, and I table this with the Legislature.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly regarding the regulation of zoos to protect animals and communities.

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

In support of it, I put my signature to the petition.

VISITOR

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'd like to take a moment to introduce, in the visitors' gallery, James Moffat, the training and trades coordinator for the Ontario Sheet Metal Workers' and Roofers' Conference, and welcome him to the chamber.

LAKERIDGE HEALTH

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm also reading a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas Durham hospitals currently receive" \$279 "per person less funding than the rest of Ontario hospitals; and

"Whereas our hospitals need strong community support to address the issues of hospital funding inequity between hospitals in Durham region and hospitals outside the GTA 905 corridor; and

"Whereas the Ontario" McGuinty "government, by providing \$7 million in ongoing funding and a one-time ... \$1-million cash infusion, is forcing Lakeridge Health to cut costs by \$8 million; and

"Whereas these cuts come in the form of (1) major reductions in addiction care, child and adolescent mental health and crisis intervention services; (2) coverage of payment to physicians; (3) potential consolidations of some services from smaller sites" in "Bowmanville and Port Perry ... and other so-called 'efficiencies';

"Therefore, be it resolved that the CAW, Local 222, Retired Workers Chapter, representing some 9,500 retired auto workers and their families in Durham call on

the Ontario government to support Lakeridge Health to (1) maintain essential core services at each site according to their current health service plan; (2) maintain their current addiction and mental health programs; and (3) maintain the current level of Lakeridge Health staff positions, volunteers and foundations whose caring, hard work and dedication have helped Lakeridge Health rank in the top 25% of hospitals in terms of efficiencies.”

This petition has been submitted to me by Bernie Heming and a number of other retired workers from the CAW in the riding of Durham. I'm pleased to support this and present it to Alex.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): There seems to be great support across Ontario for MPP David Zimmer's bill.

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

With a world-renowned zoo in Peterborough, I will affix my signature to this petition.

1530

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

“Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

“Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

“Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

“Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking

the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

“Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds.”

I'm happy to sign this and support it.

SALE OF DOMESTIC WINES AND BEERS

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I have 28,000 signatures on the following petition that I want to submit. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario restricts the sale of domestic wines and beers to the LCBO, the Beer Store and a few winery retail stores; and

“Whereas other provinces (notably Quebec) have been selling beer and wine in local convenience stores ... without any harm to the well-being of the public; and

“Whereas it is desirable to promote the sale of 100% Ontario VQA wines and Ontario brewed beer in a convenient manner consistent with a contemporary society, to promote locally grown and produced products, and support local convenience stores; and

“Whereas it is obvious that the market trends of selling wines and beer in convenience stores is not ‘if’ but when;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Liquor Control Act to permit the sale of 100% Ontario grown VQA wines and Ontario brewed beer in local convenience stores to the public throughout the province” of Ontario.

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition, and with your indulgence, it's from Strathaven Lifecare Centre, Mamwood Lifecare Centre, Fosterbrooke community nursing home in Port Perry, Wynfield in north Oshawa, and from their administrators, community advisory councils and the residents in the long-term-care facilities in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion" requesting "the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act," Bill 140;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I'm pleased to present this to Craig and sign it on behalf of my constituents.

TUITION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): This petition is:

"To Stop Tuition Fee Hikes and Improve Access and Quality in Post-Secondary Education

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government cancelled the tuition fee freeze after only two years and approved fee increases of up to 36% over the next four years; and

"Whereas tuition fees in Ontario have increased by more than four times the rate of inflation over the past 15 years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians oppose tuition fee increases and support greater public funding for colleges and universities; and

"Whereas improvements to student financial assistance are undermined by fee increases; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's recent increase to student loan limits is set to push student debt to approximately \$28,000 for a four-year program; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags significantly behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to stop tuition fee hikes and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"—reduce tuition fees to 2004 levels for all students in Ontario and implement an immediate tuition fee freeze;

"—increase public funding for post-secondary education to promote access and quality;

"—expand access to financial aid in Ontario, especially for part-time students; and

"—double the number of upfront, need-based grants for Ontario students."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature hereto.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): This petition is on behalf of constituents in Wallaceburg, Petrolia, Strathroy and Chatham.

"Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly

"Regulate Zoos to Protect Animals and Communities

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I affix my signature to it as well.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to do with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare funding, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas studies indicate that overcrowded emergency rooms result in higher mortality rates; and

"Whereas growing demand and lack of availability of long-term-care beds place increased pressure on acute care beds; and

"Whereas the operating budget for MAHC must reflect the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services for the people of Muskoka-East Parry Sound and allocate more long-term-care beds for Muskoka-East Parry Sound."

I support this petition.

GRAVESITES OF FORMER PREMIERS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I have a petition presented to me by some members of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premiers of Ontario have made enormous contributions over the years in shaping the Ontario of today; and

"Whereas, as a result, the final resting places of the 18 deceased Premiers are among the most historically significant sites in the province, but have yet to be officially recognized; and

"Whereas, were these gravesites to be properly maintained and marked with an historical plaque and a flag of Ontario, these locations would be a source of pride to the communities where these former Premiers lie buried, and provide potential points of interest for visitors;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 25, An Act to preserve the gravesites of former Premiers of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I have affixed my signature.

1540

OPPOSITION DAY

BORDER INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the 2007 Ontario budget fails to address the pressing need for border infrastructure in the Windsor region; and

That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government must immediately commit to funding the Windsor-Detroit corridor infrastructure, including tunnelled access to the next border crossing, and guarantee that there will be no toll roads.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Hampton has moved opposition day motion number 2. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: The most recent provincial budget of the McGuinty government failed a lot of people in Ontario. It failed low-income Ontarians who work for minimum wage. They work hard and play by the rules but can't get ahead because the McGuinty government continues to insist on a minimum wage that is, frankly, too low. It failed Ontario families who need a real child care plan. It failed to fix the school funding formula. It failed a number of communities.

Today I want to raise the issues surrounding how this budget failed a particular region: the region of Windsor–Essex.

Windsor and District Labour Council president Gary Parent was quoted in a recent *Globe and Mail* article as saying that Windsor is an economic barometer, that

where Windsor is going, the economy of Ontario is sure to follow. That is not good, because as of March 2007, the unemployment rate in Windsor has now reached 10.6%, one of the highest unemployment rates the city has experienced in many, many years and one of the very highest unemployment rates in the province. With that kind of unemployment rate, Ontario is in trouble if Windsor is a barometer.

In contrast to an unemployment rate of 10.6%, I believe in a good job for everyone. That's because a good job is the best way to make sure that working families share in the province's prosperity. In Ontario, manufacturing jobs are some of our very best jobs. But there is a very clear crisis in Ontario's manufacturing heartland: a jobs crisis. Since June 2004, over 140,000 of Ontario's good manufacturing jobs have been lost, and Windsor has been hit especially hard.

These aren't just numbers. These are people with families, mortgages, car payments; people who work hard and who play by the rules so they can make a decent living. The McGuinty government is letting these people down. The McGuinty government's failed policies are responsible for the destruction of 140,000 Ontario manufacturing jobs; jobs with good pay, good benefits, decent pensions. The McGuinty government refuses to do anything to address these issues—other than the Premier giving himself a \$40,000 pay raise.

People from Windsor know that when manufacturing plants close down and auto plants lay off workers, those lost jobs will have an impact far greater than the immediate number.

These problems are affecting Ontarians throughout the province, but in particular, they are hurting people in the Windsor–Essex region.

Windsor is facing some very difficult circumstances, as I say, with an unemployment rate in March 2007 of 10.6%. This is very serious. While Windsor needs action on a variety of fronts, inconsistent crossing times or delays for trucks at the Ambassador Bridge, which handles 25% of our nation's trade with the United States, cost the Windsor–Essex region and all of Ontario millions of dollars in lost manufacturing investment and jobs.

It's very clear: Windsor needs better border infrastructure to sustain jobs. For a decade, the people of Windsor have suffered because governments have tried to cut corners at the border. Once again, sadly, it looks like it's going to happen under the McGuinty government—a McGuinty government that is taking Windsor for granted. This is why I and my NDP colleagues have decided to raise the border infrastructure issues in Windsor today.

The McGuinty government could have done something about this in its recent budget but decided not to, so we want to make sure that the people of Windsor, the workers in Windsor, are not alone in calling for action now. The people of Windsor have noticed the McGuinty government's failure on this issue. They've noticed the fact that while a lot has been said, nothing much has happened.

Within a day of the provincial budget being tabled, members of the Windsor media were already calling the budget a failure and demanding action from Windsor's two absentee cabinet ministers. In the Windsor Star, Gord Henderson wrote that Dwight Duncan had been hung out to dry by his cabinet colleagues, and that if Duncan's contention "that the province's commitment to a third crossing is 'real and unequivocal,'" then "why didn't Sorbara refer to it in his budget speech and attach a price tag?"

The Windsor Star, in an editorial the day after the budget, said, "It's about time that Dwight Duncan and Sandra Pupatello showed finance minister Greg Sorbara a map of Ontario that includes the city of Windsor. If they can still remember where Windsor is, of course, because it is hardly to be found in Ontario's budget, which doles out cash for infrastructure projects in pretty much every region of the province except for Windsor and Essex county."

The people of Windsor know the McGuinty Liberals didn't stand up for them in this most recent provincial budget. They also know that their real allies in their battle for fairness have been their two federal NDP members, the only people who have consistently called for real action to address border infrastructure in Windsor. Windsor's two NDP MPs, Brian Masse and Joe Comartin, have been calling for action immediately to address Windsor's border infrastructure challenge, and they have been successful because they've forced the federal government to start taking this issue seriously and commit some \$400 million towards the creation of a third Windsor border crossing. Contrast this with the two Liberal MPPs, who are both in the McGuinty government cabinet and who should both have the ear of the Premier, but have failed in comparison. They have not forced the McGuinty government to take this issue seriously and they have not stood up for the needs of their constituents.

They have a relatively simple proposition before them. Windsor New Democrat MPs have already forced the federal government to agree to a new bridge. They have even convinced the federal government to contribute 50% of the funding for the new access route, which is a provincial responsibility. All the McGuinty government needs to do is to pony up the rest of the money for the access route.

Will the province provide funding for the access route to the bridge? When asked that question, the McGuinty government and the local representatives of the McGuinty government in Windsor simply refuse to say. Will a new access route tear through neighbourhoods, increasing smog and dangerous traffic? The McGuinty government and the two local McGuinty government MPPs won't say. But ask them what they think of ridiculously inflated estimates for a tunnel that is supported by the local councils, local mayors and families in the community, ask them what they think about cooked reports claiming the public is worried about the artificially inflated price tags, and lo and behold, the two local Liberal representatives have lots to say. They suddenly find their voice.

1550

They won't stand up for their constituents in supporting a tunnel and supporting a new border crossing. They won't stand up to the bureaucrats opposed to a border plan that families in Windsor want. In effect, Windsor's two McGuinty cabinet ministers are taking their own city, their own region, for granted. They are telling the people of Windsor that their needs, Windsor's needs, aren't important, that they expect to get re-elected without doing what they were elected to do—stand up for their constituents. Well, I think people in Windsor deserve better.

The solution, I believe, is reasonably clear. All the reports, media and the people of Windsor are unanimous: Windsor needs to be able to get goods across the border. Windsor needs improved border infrastructure. As importantly, it needs to be done right. It needs to respect the families of Windsor and ensure their air is clean and their streets are safe for their kids. What Windsor needs is a third border crossing connected to the 401 by an access tunnel, so that the west end of Windsor is not bisected by another truck transport thruway. Windsor needs this so that its manufacturing sector can be sustained and begin to take off again. Windsor needs this and Ontario needs this. New Democrats are going to continue to raise the issue in Ottawa and here in Toronto so that Windsor's needs will be addressed and so Windsor's voice will be heard in the provincial Legislature.

I call upon the McGuinty government, where is the funding? Where is the commitment of the McGuinty government to the improved border infrastructure, the improved border crossing that the people of Windsor have been very patient in asking for and very patient in working for? Where is the McGuinty government and where are the McGuinty government MPPs on this issue when it comes to speaking up for and standing up for the people of Windsor?

The Acting Speaker: The member from Ottawa-Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I appreciate the opportunity to speak about the motion introduced by the leader of the third party today. The member for Kenora-Rainy River makes three claims today: (1) that the Ontario budget fails to address the need for border infrastructure in the Windsor region; (2) that the funding for the Windsor-Detroit infrastructure be committed immediately; and (3) that there be no toll roads. I'd like to address each of these points in sequence.

First of all, the leader of the NDP suggests that we have not mentioned any commitment with regard to the Windsor-Detroit border in the budget tabled on March 22, 2007. As part the Ontario budget announcement some three weeks ago, the provincial government reaffirmed its commitment to the Windsor-Detroit gateway and stated that our first priority is increasing capacity at the Windsor corridor.

Of course, Windsor-Detroit crossings handled \$158.7 billion in trade in 2004. That's over 28% of the total Canada-US trade. So obviously we would mention it in

our budget. I'd just like to read from the budget prepared by Mr. Sorbara:

"Border Improvements....

"In Progress:

"—the Let's Get Windsor–Essex Moving strategy, announced in March 2004, including \$300 million to improve local roads and highways, and improve the Windsor-Detroit Tunnel Plaza"—those projects are underway.

"—environmental assessment studies and community consultation on a new Detroit River crossing and on access-road options"—again, that is underway.

"—over \$200 million invested to widen Highway 401 from Windsor to Tilbury, in partnership with the federal government."

So, in total, \$500 million presently working to improve the border crossing.

In fact, the Ontario government has taken a leadership role and significant progress has been made in the identification of an end-to-end crossing system connecting Highway 401 to Interstate 75. Furthermore, the budget document promises that construction of the new Windsor-Detroit crossing will be completed in 2013.

The Detroit River International Crossing Study, comprised of federal, state and provincial agencies, is a complex and ambitious undertaking. It is on track to be completed more quickly than comparable projects would have been in the past. We would all like this process to move along even more quickly. However, we must ensure that the environmental assessment process is followed and that this process meets the standards outlined in Ontario's Environmental Assessment Act and other environmental legislation.

If we were to rush to make a decision the way the member for Kenora–Rainy River has suggested, we would be rushing a process that I'm sure he knows cannot be compromised. The honourable member is asking that we undermine the environmental assessment process governed by legislation. As we all know, an environmental assessment is a transparent decision-making process that includes close consultation with all the affected parties and agencies and offers many opportunities for public input. As a matter of fact, this EA included extensive public consultation, with more than 150 engagements to date.

It also requires the consideration of all reasonable alternatives and the assessment of all impacts, whether they are social, economic, health-related or environmental, just to name a few. This particular environmental assessment will meet the requirements through the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act and the Canadian environmental act. In the United States, the environmental impact study will meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

The border transportation partnership identified 15 possible river crossings in June 2005. This is part of the process. All alternatives must be considered. There were 15 different crossings that had to be looked at initially. Through systematic analysis and evaluation, this list was

reduced to the practical alternatives currently under consideration: three river crossings; three plaza locations on the Canadian side; five options for the access road, including at-grade, depressed and tunnelled roadways on our side of the river.

I'm sure that the member for Kenora–Rainy River would agree that this makes for a complicated environmental assessment process with numerous players and multiple levels of government involved. However, we must ensure that the environment is a priority throughout the planning stage and observe the legislation governing this process. Particular concerns of note include the study of soil and groundwater conditions and, of course, air quality. I would think that this would be a priority for the leader of the NDP as well. I'm sure that the impacts on public health and safety would also be of interest to the leader of the third party. Despite all these considerations and all the parties involved, we are moving ahead according to the schedule.

The Detroit River international crossing EA commenced in 2005—that's the selection process under the environment assessment—and it is expected that the preferred alternative to connect the 401 to I-75 will be identified late this year. This is moving at a rate that was planned and according to applicable legislation. It is a priority for Ontario and it's certainly a priority for this government.

Allow me to remind this House that it was under this government that the EA for the Detroit River international crossing was initiated and it is this government that is moving the project forward.

I would like to let the member for Kenora–Rainy River know that the commitment to the Detroit River crossing was reiterated in the budget and, further, that the McGuinty government and its partners have funded the planning need and feasibility study and the EA for a total of \$4 million.

The second and third points that the member for Kenora–Rainy River makes are related. The leader of the third party suggest that funding for this project be committed Immediately. First of all, the border transportation partnership is on schedule to identify a single preferred option for a new access road in Canada linking Highway 401 to a new inspection plaza, a river crossing, a US inspection plaza and the US interstate system this year. Once the preferred alternative is selected in 2007, the design for this project will proceed in 2008 and probably be completed in 2009. Construction can then start and the entire project will be completed, as it says in the budget document, in 2013. This is the planning of the four governments—the US, Canada, the state of Michigan and the province of Ontario. This is their planning, to have it done in 2013.

This process, as with all major transportation projects in Ontario, will see the budget determined during the design process. If we were to allocate funds to construction at this time, it would be premature and could possibly prejudice the outcome of the environmental assessment. The cost of this project—there are still five

alternatives—ranges from \$620 million on the low side to \$3.8 billion on the high side. I just ask the member for Kenora which he would choose, which he would fund. Of course, during the environmental assessment process we haven't determined the selected alternative, we haven't been able to fix the dollar value, and committing funds before the process is complete is against the environmental assessment.

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What we can tell you at this point is that the Ministry of Transportation will commit to 50% of the cost for building the access road for a new Windsor-Detroit border crossing, with the other 50% coming from Transport Canada; that's by agreement. This funding will be provided alongside previous commitments of over \$500 million to the Windsor-Essex area for transit, highway infrastructure, municipal roads and bridges, and a border transportation partnership since October 2003. These are investments to be proud of.

With regard to tolling, it would be premature for a final decision on this issue as well. The cost of the crossing itself will be absorbed by the federal governments of Canada and the US, and it is too early to prejudge a decision on tolling from either the Canadian or US side of the bridge.

To summarize, it seems as though the leader of the third party is anxious to circumvent the environmental assessment process and essentially have the government break the law. He is willing to commit funds prematurely to a project which has not been defined by the environmental assessment process and whose cost has not yet been determined. He's asking us to promise not to introduce tolls without consulting the other parties that will be funding the crossing. In short, he is asking us to break the rules and to undermine public health and safety, to the detriment of the environment. Taking all of this into consideration, I would have to do no less than ask the leader of the third party to withdraw this motion.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in the debate on the motion put forward by Mr. Hampton. I would say at the outset that I certainly support—we support—the intent of this motion to finally see the government take action on a file that is suffering decision gridlock by this government. What is surprising about the government's lack of action on this file is that we have a former Minister of Finance and a Minister of Economic Development who represent Windsor, both of whom know full well the importance of dealing with the gridlock that we have at the border crossing. We shouldn't have to educate either of those ministers or the current Minister of Finance to remind them that some \$570 billion of two-way merchandise trade takes place at that Windsor-Detroit border. The fact that there is such gridlock there now is not only affecting the economy, it's also affecting the quality of life of the people who live in Windsor.

I can tell you that as far back as July 24, 2003, the government of Ontario recognized at that time the importance of moving forward with a major infrastructure

program. At that time, on an interim basis, the province of Ontario committed \$300 million. That was matched by the federal government at the time. There was a nine-point strategic plan that was announced by the Minister of Transportation at the time, as well as the federal minister, who was Allan Rock. I happen to know personally about that announcement because I was there as Minister of Transportation. At that time, I had discussions with both members from Windsor, who I referenced. They were supportive of that nine-point plan. I think what's happened here in the meantime is that neither member is willing to take a position on what in fact is the right thing to do.

The reality is that there will be people who will not be happy with whatever decision is taken, because there will be an interference with some quality of life along the corridors that ultimately are determined to be taken. That is unfortunate, but the reality is that this is a matter not only of importance to the local economy; it is a matter of impacting the Ontario economy and, in fact, the national economy. So I recall well being involved in the discussions at the time that the decision was taken by the provincial government of the day and the federal government of the day that this is an issue where we will have to override many of the localized objections that will naturally take place when a decision is made about what this new crossing or the multiple new crossings are going to look like. That's unfortunate, but that's a responsibility of leadership.

My concern here is not so much that the funds aren't designated in the budget; the real issue here is a lack of leadership on the part of this government. I think what we have here is a hesitation, because we're now three and a half years into the mandate of this government. They've had the responsibility to make these decisions as a government for three and a half years, and they have done nothing other than to shuffle the cards on the table. It's not the first time that we hear from this government, "Oh, we're doing a great deal. We have this study happening and that study happening." And while the studies are taking place, the problem continues to get worse; the impact on the community continues to become more desperate.

What we're calling on the government to do is to make a decision, to move forward. They're prepared to accelerate environmental processes in a number of other areas. We've heard from the Minister of the Environment in this place over the last number of months on numerous occasions that because of the importance of a particular project, they're prepared to streamline, accelerate and move environmental processes forward. Why not in this case? I'll tell you why: because we're too close to an election—again, too close to an election. Neither member from Windsor wants to be negatively affected. That's really what this comes down to; it comes down to election politics. Rather than demonstrate leadership, what we have is non-decision and all on the backs of the local economy, the provincial economy, the national economy. More important than all of that is the quality of life for

the people who make their homes in the Windsor area, because while they continue to allow the gridlock to happen, the impact on the environment, the pollution that takes place, the frustration within that local area for residents—because the entire corridor is bordered by residential areas—until such time as the government takes a decision to create an appropriate gateway and ensure that the transportation corridors are appropriately constructed, will continue to get worse.

So I say to the parliamentary assistant, with all due respect, I appreciate his defence of the non-action on the part of the government, but it's not going to wash in Windsor. It's not going to wash with the trucking industry that has been urging provincial and federal governments to get on with this project for years. We thought we were there, we thought we had a program in place in 2003, announced we were looking for the international study group to come forward with the recommendations for the long-term solutions, and I'll tell you what we have now: Three and a half years after this government was sworn in in this place, we have nothing more than more studies.

At some point, the people are going to wake up and realize that two supposedly powerful cabinet ministers on the front benches in this place are folding their hands, are washing their hands of this because they simply don't want to take a stand. They don't want to go into this next election and have people point the finger at them and say, "You're doing something I don't like." There is a void of leadership on the part of this government, particularly with something as important as an international border and gateway. I believe that that is unconscionable. It's why people are elected to this place, to make those decisions that are not only right for the short term, but for the long-term benefit of our communities, of our province and of our country.

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So I will be voting in favour of the resolution, but I do want to go on record as saying that there's one aspect of this resolution that I do take exception to, and that's the reference to no tolling. The reason I say that is that we have to be practical. I think it's something that the government is starting to learn, because when they were here, they sang the same song: no tolls, no involvement of the private sector, everything has to be paid by the taxpayer. What they're realizing now as they're sitting around the cabinet table is that that's all nice and good, and it sounds good when you're out there on the campaign trail, but when you come to the reality of governing, it's unrealistic. Somebody has to pay the toll. I happen to be one who believes that a user should pay a toll, pay a fee. I believe that in this particular case, knowing what I know about the cost that will be involved in finally getting on with the project, there is a responsibility, and should be a responsibility, for an appropriate measurement of the cost that should be assessed to a user of those border crossings. It's taking place now. You go to the bridge that's there, you go to the tunnel that's there, and you pay your toll. People simply accept that as

a matter of fact. So I fully expect that in the real world that will also be a component of any future border crossing.

Having said that, I want to thank the leader of the third party for bringing this forward, for pointing out, not only to the people of Windsor but to the people of the province, that this is a government that refuses to take the difficult decisions, and because of that, they continue to create more and more problems, not only for individuals, for communities, for businesses, but for our entire province and our competitiveness in a very competitive world.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): It's an honour to follow Howard Hampton, the leader of the New Democratic Party, and to support, of course, this opposition day motion. It was also interesting for me to hear the comments of the member for Ottawa-Orléans and also, with a great degree of interest, the member for Oak Ridges.

Just for the sake of those who are watching at home, I thought I'd, to coin a phrase, back up the truck a little bit and talk a little bit about the history that this is predicated upon. The Detroit River International Crossing Study group assessed the environmental impact. The member opposite was asking about environmental studies. Well, there was one done on the impact of a newer, expanded Detroit River crossing.

The new bridge, hoped to be built by 2013, would also involve the construction of new customs inspection plazas and connecting highways. Construction could start as soon as next year, they ascertained. The DRIC considered three locations for a new border crossing at that time and has decided a new border crossing should be built somewhere in west Windsor, with the trucks from Highway 401 accessing it down Huron Church Road and Talbot Road. Access may come via a tunnel, a road "at grade" or one "below grade." Tunnelling is overwhelmingly the preferred option, endorsed by local councillors, the mayor and both NDP MPs. This speaks to the lack of a study that's been done. Clearly, it has been studied, and clearly a decision has been reached.

In the 2007 federal budget, the Harper government allocated \$400 million for the Windsor gateway border crossing. The funding is earmarked to support construction of the new access route. Again, concerns about funding: There's \$400 million waiting. When local NDP MPs Comartin and Masse criticized the Harper government for only allocating one year of funding, they of course held the greatest degree of scorn, not for the Harper government in this instance but for the McGuinty budget that did not even mention the border at all, much less allocate any funding. So funding studies: both done, and no action for Windsor on behalf of the McGuinty government or the members from Windsor.

Just to follow up on this, to talk about what Windsor wants, Mayor Eddie Francis and other local politicians say they are ready to push senior government decision-makers into building a tunnel to keep border-bound trucks off city streets: "Tunnelling is the best solution we've seen thus far," Francis said."

Essex county warden Nelson Santos also supports a truck tunnel: "This infrastructure will be important for the county and region as a whole," Santos said. "I view a tunnel as the least intrusive on the community. There is a need to remove trucks from local streets, and tunnelling provides the best opportunity. It's the one that provides the largest amount of health and safety benefits." Another vote of confidence for this project.

To continue, on April 2, city council endorsed tunnelling for the traffic corridor leading to a new border crossing. Council unanimously supported a resolution that a binational commission, the Detroit River international crossing team, assigned to fix the city's international truck woes, "be advised they must have a tunnelled solution."

So it seems that as far as Windsor is concerned, the jury is in. They have made their decision; they've made their call. But what they've met with on behalf of the McGuinty government is complete and utter inaction.

My colleague Howard Hampton, leader of the New Democratic Party, started to read some quotes from the Windsor Star, and there have been many. I will continue reading other quotes from the Windsor Star.

This is more generally about the budget in which they were ignored completely and totally. Here is another one, from March 23 of this year: "When you read the budget document, it's as if you're living in a place where there's prosperity all around and plenty of jobs.... By not acknowledging the issues facing Windsor, you aren't acknowledging that those issues exist and need to be addressed." This was by Lydia Miljan, associate professor of political science at the University of Windsor—an authority, one might say.

I go on to quote from Lloyd Brown-John, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Windsor, who said, "[Duncan and Papatello] obviously don't have very much; you'd think they'd have some influence."

Continuing other quotes from the Windsor Star—these are all from March; just one month's worth of quotes—"If there is no line item funding in this budget for an access road, residents would be justified in asking what, exactly, Papatello and Duncan are doing in Toronto."

Finally, from Gary Parent, president of the Windsor and District Labour Council: "They were silent in regards to Windsor, which has the highest unemployment in the province. I am mad. I'm angry that someone, somewhere, didn't instill that in someone's mind.... Obviously I'll be asking our area MPPs, 'What is good in this budget for someone in Windsor?'" A good question indeed.

Certainly what is going on in Windsor, what's happening in Windsor, is indicative of what's happening across the province. That's why it's so important that we speak to this motion, that we speak about Windsor this afternoon.

As you heard my leader say, we've lost over 140,000 good manufacturing jobs in this province. Certainly the people across the aisle tout figures that they've replaced them with more jobs. But when you actually look at the jobs they replaced them with, they are service sector jobs,

precarious employment jobs, part-time jobs; these are not in any way equivalent to the good, high-paying manufacturing jobs that this province has lost. Of course, we all know that what we need in this province is someone to look at this situation, not to walk around it as this government done. What the New Democratic Party has proposed is a jobs commissioner to look at exactly the issue of lost manufacturing jobs and actually do something about it.

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The other night I was on the town hall circuit promoting the \$10 minimum wage, which we do not have yet and won't have for three years. We are still, and so are many thousands across Ontario, asking for a \$10 minimum wage now—not in three years, not sometime never, but now. I was speaking, in this particular instance, in Newmarket to a group of United Church women, the average age being well in advance of 65—women in their 70s and 80s, a delightful audience at Trinity church in Newmarket. Some of the comments these women were making were drawn from their own experiences.

I asked them, "Do you remember when you were younger that in the province of Ontario you could actually survive as a working family on one income; you could have a house with a car in the driveway on one income?" And I said, "How many of your children can do the same? For those who have grandchildren, how many of your grandchildren can exist as a family on one income and be able to afford a house and a car on one income?" They all admitted that none of them could. Now that's a palpable change.

Of course, there are other palpable changes that we see over the course of time in this province: job losses, which I've just referred to, and an increase in poverty. We are now dealing with a poverty level of 15% to 17% in this province. This budget does nothing to affect that.

I'm sure that those people from Windsor who are listening and who will be reading these transcripts are most concerned, because they live in the area of highest unemployment, as you've heard. So again, what happens in Windsor is indicative of what's happening in this province: a loss of good jobs and the necessity to work two and three jobs just to keep a roof over your head and feed your children. That's the situation right now.

I'm going to leave some time for my colleagues to speak to this motion. Certainly, I'm in favour of it, and more generally, I'm in favour of seeing some action from across the aisle on the issues that really mean the most to hard-working Ontario families. We're not seeing that. We're not seeing it for Windsor, we're not seeing it for Newmarket, we're not seeing it for Parkdale-High Park, we're not seeing it for York South-Weston. We're not seeing any of what we want to see to address the problems.

In the case of Windsor, the classic symbol of this is their inaction on this border-crossing, which is why we bring it forward. It's the symbol par excellence of what this government should be doing and is not doing.

Despite all the evidence to the contrary, despite the community asking for it, despite all of the studies that have been done and despite some of the money already being there, they're not acting.

Yes, I support the motion. I would like to see it happen immediately, and I urge everyone here to vote with their conscience and vote for Windsor.

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): It's a pleasure for me to stand today to speak in opposition to this motion, and I'll give you a couple of reasons for it.

It's always interesting to me that those who are furthest from the problem always have the simplest and best solution. I suspect that anybody on that side of the House who has spoken today or who will speak hasn't had a briefing from the Ministry of Transportation on this issue.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I have.

Mr. Crozier: You have? Good. I'll be anxious to hear from you.

In the context of this motion, I agree with the member for Ottawa-Orléans: What Mr. Hampton is asking for is irresponsible. It's almost as though he either has forgotten or never knew what the words "due diligence" mean. I think the same goes for the member for Oak Ridges. He mentioned that he was the Minister of Transportation when all of this started. And do you know what? I thought, at that time, that he bought in to the plan that would have a new international crossing by the year 2013. It sounds to me like he has changed his mind and that he too has forgotten what due diligence means. Those are just a couple of reasons why I won't be able to support this motion.

The McGuinty government, I can assure you, and I assure my residents who surround the city of Windsor, is thoroughly and resolutely committed to the Windsor-Detroit gateway under the ReNew Ontario plan, and our first priority is increasing capacity in the Windsor corridor. Ontario in fact has not only taken the leadership role, but has been given the leadership role in this by the federal government. I'm proud to say that our current Minister of Transportation has visited the Windsor area every month, if not more, but I know it's been at least every month, with this issue being a top priority.

Again I'll go to the member from Oak Ridges, who, as he reminded us, was a minister in the former government. The only time I can remember him coming down, other than when he was at the announcement of the Windsor gateway plan, was during the election, to say with little confidence that they would look at the four-laning of Highway 3 from Leamington to Windsor—which, by the way, carries a great amount of produce from the Leamington area, a great amount of automotive products from Leamington, for example, to and across the border. You know what? Our government didn't just say they would look at it; our government, under the current Minister of Transportation, Donna Cansfield, announced last fall—and it's now in the design phase, for construction to begin this summer—\$80 million for an improvement to Highway 3, running from Leamington to Windsor, to

hook up with this route that will go to the border. That's action, and that's even outside what you folks are asking for. So not only are we doing what should be done in the appropriate way, but we're doing even more.

The Detroit River International Crossing—or DRIC, as it's known down home—Study is comprised of federal, state and provincial agencies, and municipal agencies as well. It's a complex and I would say ambitious undertaking, and it's on track to be completed more quickly than comparable projects have been in the past. Here again I want to point out to those who are calling for it to be done yesterday that we all would like it to be done yesterday. Any time we decide to do something, we decide that we would have liked it before. But that crossing, like the current Ambassador Bridge and tunnel, is going to be there for years and years. If we weren't to do the due diligence and we were to do it wrong, where would we be? To hurry up: that's the simple answer. Of course, we'd like it done sooner. We have a position. We'd like to see the process move along more quickly. But the DRIC Study, the Detroit River International Crossing Study, is a process that's been open and transparent and has had extensive public involvement. A full analysis of how best to design, construct, operate and finance the access road is under way, is on track and is on time. This will include as well the involvement of the private sector.

I want to mention one thing. It would appear as though the member for Oak Ridges is in favour, on the one hand, of tolling, because he said he had one problem with the resolution, and that was where it came to tolling. He went to some great length to explain to us all about something we know very well: that there will be tolls on this bridge. But that, to the member for Oak Ridges, is not what the resolution is talking about. It's talking about tolls on the roads that lead to the bridge. I would suspect he's one of the ones over there, at least, who hasn't had a briefing on this, or he would have known that. To my knowledge, in the years that I've followed it, there is nothing on the table about toll roads. So I don't know where the member from Oak Ridges is coming from, and whether he really knows what it is he opposes or not.

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In any event, the analysis that I spoke about of the design, construction, operating and financing of the highway will follow the principles of this government's Building a Better Tomorrow framework, and it will, in its most important area, protect the public interest.

The DRIC Study team is completing a thorough and systematic study of five options for the access road, three possible river crossings, and associated inspection plazas. And this is important—and it's interesting that the leader of the third party doesn't understand this; he was in government at one time, and I wouldn't think he has forgotten the kinds of obligations the government has, but I guess he has—that to allocate funds for construction at this time would be premature and could possibly prejudice the outcome of the environmental assessment. If what Mr. Hampton wants to do is prejudice the out-

come of the environmental assessment, I wish he would stand up and say that.

The DRIC Study team is looking at five options for the six-lane freeway access to the new crossing, including at-grade, depressed and tunnelled options.

The design and preliminary cost estimates of the access road, plaza and river crossing will be developed as the study team moves through the final stages of the environmental assessment process.

Isn't that what we want? Apparently not, according to the leader of the third party. He doesn't want to bother with these things: "Let's jeopardize the environmental assessment. Let's not look at the options in a transparent way." In fact, I think there have been somewhere in the neighbourhood of 150 public meetings on this issue. The design and preliminary cost estimates will take all of this into consideration.

The border transportation partnership is moving forward and on schedule to identify a safe, secure and efficient international crossing system, extending from Highway 401 in Ontario to the interstate system in the United States.

Again, if the leader of the third party doesn't want to do any of that, doesn't want to take the time to do it right, I guess it's his right to ask that this be done the way he's looking at it. But I don't agree with him. That's why I agree with my friend from Ottawa-Orléans that this should just simply be thrown out. I would have thought, at the very least, that if you wanted to talk about this issue, you would have had a more comprehensive, better-researched and better-understood motion before us today.

The border transportation partnership, as I said, is moving ahead on schedule. To date, the DRIC Study team has reached project milestones. These include narrowing the initial 15 alternative river crossings to an area of continued analysis; identifying practical alternatives for the access road, inspection plaza and river crossing; and updating the public on the status of the study at key points along the way. Four public information houses have occurred, with more to follow, but there have been 150 meetings that have involved the overall project.

The DRIC Study team is continuing the technical analysis of the practical alternatives. This work will provide the information necessary for the study team and the public to understand the benefits and impacts associated with each of the alternatives. The study team has made significant progress on all of the technical information.

I want to say, in closing, that it's interesting—I'm not surprised—that the leader of the third party would ask that we allocate funds in this budget for construction at this time, when to do that would be premature and, quite frankly, might prejudice the outcome of the environmental assessment. And I will have no part of that.

Mr. O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the NDP opposition day motion. On behalf of John Tory and the Conservatives, and as the critic for transportation, I respect the issue that the leader of the NDP has brought

before the House in the form of this motion. In fact, I would say that work continues.

I'm just going to give for the viewer today a bit of the background, much of which has been mentioned by the previous speaker, on behalf of John Tory as Leader of the Opposition, Frank Klees, a former Minister of Transportation. The previous speaker, the member from Essex, Mr. Crozier, mentioned that there were improvements in that stretch of the 401 westbound towards Windsor. In fact, I could demonstrate that for you in their capital plan, indeed flowing out of commitments made in that border agreement that Minister Klees at that time announced. I have that press release here with me, if Mr. Crozier would like a copy. That money actually is building lanes in your riding today that flowed back during his time. That was part of the Windsor action plan.

As I said, I have been briefed by the ministry as critic. We're all concerned with how important this particular aspect of the highway system is. This report was issued by the ministry—some very good staff over there, and the assistant deputy minister particularly is very forthcoming, provided you have the right questions, in providing a good response. Now, this is a southern Ontario highway program between 2006 and 2010. These are their capital commitments. There are maps and accompanying explanations for almost every mile of highway under the control of the province of Ontario that's getting some attention.

I thought it was appropriate, for this debate, to look into this capital plan and to see what it says, what their promises are. I don't want to get into that, but when the Liberals promise something, quite frankly, you may expect to be disappointed—a sad thing to say, and as we approach an election, we know that's more and more probable each day. We see it in Lottogate. We see the doors opening towards—avoiding answering the questions. We're at 120 questions on that issue with no answers.

I'm going to read from this report, which is put out by the ministry—and due respect to the hard-working staff there that I hope to have the opportunity to work with when in government. But I will read it. Under this section, there's Windsor, Simcoe county, London, Sarnia, and there are specific references to each area of the province, and there are these maps—again, I repeat—actually by project. There are project numbers and you can actually track. The problem is that some of these target dates to be completed are two elections away. It's troubling. We're hearing that in the budget for children's services, community services and things like that. They have promised that two elections away they will actually deliver the final dollar; the down-payment has been made in advance of the election, of course.

But I'm going to be very specific in response to the opposition day motion, taking upon it a general review and more specifically towards the tunnel project, which I've been following and have been there just recently. In fact, I was there this summer and met with a former MPP from that area. We met with some constituents from that

area, some of the constituents of two current Liberal ministers, Minister Papatello and Minister Duncan—sort of absentee landlords—and Ms. Di Cocco as well. The fact is that the three—even in the Sarnia-Lambton riding—basically are here most of the time and I'm not sure they even read the Windsor Star. If they read the Windsor Star, they'd be somewhat concerned, quite frankly, with the disappointment with any sign of leadership or a plan.

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But even as I refer to this document, on page 9—I think it's important to read because I'm sure Dalton signed off on it. It's got the nice colours that they use on the election signs, the matching kind of—you know, the Liberal colour is maroon; that is what this is. So their signature is all over it. Here's what it says—Windsor, this is their plan. This is the commitment from McGuinty to Windsor, so if anybody from Windsor is listening—and I suspect Elizabeth Palotas is listening. She has written to most of the Liberal members, including probably Mr. Crozier.

It's so short that with the limited time I have—this section on Windsor is so short it's actually embarrassing; it really is. It's frightening. In fact, there's no money. Actually, there's not just no money, there's no vision. There's no plan to complete this project. Yet I got into the economics of this important border part of Ontario, the auto sector and all. What it says here is, to get to the point, they're going four- to six-lane widening of the 401 from Essex—Road 27, Mr. Crozier—to Highway 77 near Windsor. This is a federal-provincial cost-shared project under the strategic highway infrastructure program. The acronym is SHIP. Expanding this stretch of highway will improve safety and traffic flow on Ontario's most important trade corridor. Expected completion, 2007—probably somewhere around a photo op time prior to the election in October. You become cynical after some time in this job. The overall plan, improvements relate to the 2006 construction plan.

I'm just going to go back here, for the viewers primarily, if you give me a moment here. I went to Mr. Klees's action plan on Windsor when he was minister. I actually have the announcement. I actually have the federal announcement on the gateway. I also have the joint commitment by the federal and provincial governments at that time of \$300 million. It's the \$300 million committed when we were government that's being used by the ministry today, as it should be, years later. It takes five or six years for these projects to come from concept to delivery of final service and product. That money was put in when Ernie Eves was the Premier of this province, into the Ministry of Transportation budget for the long-term planning. Theirs is 2006 to 2010. There is a plan that predates this which deals with this issue.

Now, more importantly, as you bring this thing a little closer to home, there are more details on that announcement. If members of the government side would want it, I'd ask and encourage you if you represent anything close—I know the member from Ottawa-Orléans

doesn't; he represents an area that has other problems. Certainly there are many problems: gridlock, congestion, no plan for transit, just an absolute vacant record in terms of many, many issues. I could tell you right now—I witness it—many people who are listening today are stuck in gridlock as we speak: the Don Valley Parkway and the 401, or the 427, the bus accident today.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Those are parking lots.

Mr. O'Toole: The evidence is clear—not just at Windsor—that it is a problem for the economy of this province. It's not just the board of trade in Toronto, it's the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. They're all saying, "Wake up." The arteries of the economy are our highways and transportation infrastructure. It has been defined as gridlock or, as the member from Timmins-James Bay says, in many cases these thoroughfares are parking lots. We haven't seen to any great extent a new or expanded vision or plan or money.

I just want to go back to reminding members that the issue here, the opposition day motion by Mr. Hampton, is critical. Now why would I draw—as a Conservative, we're very engaged in this debate because of the important link between the standard of living we all wish for and want and having a strong, vibrant economy without the chains and shackles that the McGuinty government has put on in the current budget and the previous budget. All of this shows up every single day. When I listen to announcements day after day after day, they're post-dated cheques until after the election, for the most part, for children's services, for mental health services. The Lakeridge hospital in my riding was told and instructed to cut \$3 million from children's mental health services within the riding of Durham. I'm appalled. And yet, Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, this whole issue is tied together: the border, the economy and the reduction of services in Durham riding and Durham region.

I was at a rather gracious open house for the LHIN, the local health integration network. It's anything but local; I think their head office is in Algonquin Park. But I was at the opening and they had lovely sandwiches and things like that, which is important, and I think everyone should have a party, but I'm not sure what the plan is. Here we've got all the hospitals, the hospital boards, the hospital foundations. In Durham, for instance, they are shortfalled on the operating side. You look at the GTA/905 report; we are \$280 per person less than our counterparts in other parts of the province.

I'm prepared on that health care debate to say this: Let's say I recognize Sick Kids Hospital and Sunnybrook and some of the centres of excellence, in Toronto for the most part, but there's the heart institute in Ottawa, there's the London Health Sciences Centre. These should be excluded from that health/hospital budget stuff. The Ontario Hospital Association should isolate what it costs for a teaching hospital. We need them, we want them, we support them, but they shouldn't be part of the overall.

Then let's say what the average money left is for every one of the community hospitals, whether it's in Port

Perry, Bowmanville, Whitby, Oshawa, Kitchener or North York—wherever. We want our fair share. Some say that \$280 is not exact or it's a misleading number. That could be done by the high-paid bureaucrats in the ministry before they get to the LHINs.

I'm going back to the border issue. The link is that it's affecting our health care. The failure to deliver a plan and the resources to solve the border is a factor that's affecting our economy in Durham, and I put to you, every member here today should be standing on their feet and standing up for their constituents because of the failure of—no plan, once again, by the McGuinty government on the border.

Why do I relate this? Here it is here, the importance of the trade barrier. These are accurate, statistical, non-biased numbers. These are from Statistics Canada, and partly from Mr. Chudleigh, our critic in that area. In US dollars, there's an estimated \$1.2 billion in trade across the US-Canada border daily. Do you realize how important that artery is?

How do I visualize this amount of money? Over 40% of it—that's \$480 million—is at the international land border crossing in the Windsor-Detroit region. What does that mean at \$480 million? On this daily trade route it is as much as \$234 million, or one fifth of the total trade in the automotive sector alone. When I look at the automotive sector, they are in a state of siege. I know we had Dura Automotive last week announce its closing, and I personally know two young, well-trained, well-educated, disciplined engineers who work for Dura Automotive. They are now without a job.

Possibly the competitiveness of Ontario in the auto sector can be directly traced to the lack of a plan by the McGuinty government, let alone the poor Minister of Transportation. She hasn't been given the tools or the resources or the authority to solve this problem. Why do I say that? The response in the Windsor Star—and I see the Minister of Energy is here and he would know that. The Windsor Star, when the federal government in their last budget announced \$400 million toward the ongoing completion of this project—and I could quote that. He said that the whole project is now in the lap, I would say, of the McGuinty government. He said that it's a provincial area.

I fully understand the international problems and trying to find resolutions to this because there's the federal government in Canada, the federal government in the United States—because it's an international issue. So I'm not flogging the whole thing on to the McGuinty government, but they've got to show some leadership. At least make a statement in support of Mr. Hampton's motion here today. Let's get on with it. We're looking for somebody to make a decision.

I see both members here from Windsor. I'm sure they're here because of this debate and I hope they take time to speak. But I'm more interested in how they're going to vote. I will be watching and I'd encourage the viewers to look that up on the online Hansard just to find out how that happened.

I would say that this important link with the economy and this border issue—Canada and the US enjoy the largest bi-national trading relationship in the world. It's valued at \$531 billion. These are huge numbers. Forty-five million vehicles use Ontario-US borders every year. The importance of these links have been somewhat not given the recognition they deserve. It's important to recognize that the infrastructure funding for a new Windsor-Detroit border crossing was a priority in the Windsor and District Chamber of Commerce submission at the pre-budget hearings. I participated in those hearings. They were there. They made their positions known. In fact, the mayor of Windsor made his position clearly known. What's missing here—you wouldn't want Stephen Harper coming, when he's representing Canada and the territories, and telling Dalton or Minister Cansfield what to do. They have given them money, and what we need is a vision. We need some kind of commitment. For those who find this issue a little bit stale or perhaps not interesting, the important link of this has been made with the economy, our quality of life, the competitiveness of our economy, of this one decision.

1650

We asked 120 questions on the Lottogate scandal, the lottery scandal. We haven't had one answer. This is one question here today that the opposition, the NDP, has raised in this motion about the importance of that Windsor border-crossing issue.

If you look at it, there's quite a good article, quite frankly—this one here is from the Windsor Star, so these are local comments. This is a response to "New Border Route Could Begin Next Year." This is important; the Premier should be listening. If he doesn't, I'll send a copy of Hansard.

It says, "Ottawa's \$400-million federal budget allocation for the Windsor gateway border crossing project is earmarked to support construction of the controversial new Huron Church Road ... superhighway, confirmed federal transportation and finance authorities...." That would be Minister Flaherty and Lawrence Cannon, the Minister of Transportation: excellent members. Harper is actually focused on this. This is one part of a huge country he's trying to govern. He's got to do Dalton's job.

"The feds have also provided \$10 million over three years to Transport Canada staff," to be in Windsor to support this effort to get the project moving along. So there is a note of urgency. This is a report from march 20, so it's fairly current.

It goes on, and I quote: "'This shouldn't be considered final funding,' said Mark Butler, spokesman for Transport Canada. 'It's an initial set of funds and there could be substantially more.'"

So they're saying it. They're committed; they're behind it; they're with it. They have the plan, the energy, the vision.

All of that—that's the tragic point of this debate—is missing in action. It's troublesome. What's the problem? They're coming up to an election and they don't want to

rock the boat. What's the rocking the boat issue about? I'm going to get to it.

In the budget, the federal government unveiled money, pledged 50% towards the cost of the new border access road that will cut through south Windsor from the end of Highway 401—you're familiar with that if you travel that area—to the new border crossing planned somewhere in the Brighton Beach area.

It goes on to say, "But the feds"—here is the important thing—"have conceded authority to the province of Ontario...." There you have it. They've said to you, "Here is some money." We are promised 50%. What's the plan? It's like question period: There's never any answer.

It's tragic, what's happened. I think they're waiting, trying to not make any mistakes, until October 10, when the election is. Of course, the election was supposed to be October 4, I think, but they changed that, like a few other mistakes they've made as well. But the feds have conceded this. The highway stretches roughly six kilometres, from Howard Avenue to the E.C. Row Expressway. Listen, this is the issue, this is the decision Dalton and his cabinet colleagues have to make, and I would suspect that Mr. Dwight Duncan, minister, and Ms. Sandra Pupatello, minister at the cabinet table, should be forcing this decision: Will the expressway be at-grade or below-grade or tunnelled? It comes down to this. They won't make that one critical, pivotal decision to move forward in case they upset someone.

Well, let me tell you, leadership is about making difficult decisions. Cutting the ribbon, photo ops, you could get your children to stand in. Making tough decisions is quite another issue. You're liable to upset someone. But to move forward for all of the citizens takes leadership. And that leadership, I can tell you, is what's missing. People on the other side perhaps could yell or barrack. The only time you actually upset someone is when you make a difficult decision—the only time. When you're giving out the cheque, you're not likely to get too much criticism at that sort of venue.

Here's an interesting thing in this article, along with hundreds of articles that I have on this: "A binational commission assigned to solve the border traffic problem—the Detroit River international crossing team"—that's the DRIC; you'll hear these terms if you're paying attention—"claimed tunnel construction costs for that stretch would be ... \$3.8 billion." Let's keep it simple here: I would say the tunnel is probably in the \$4-billion range. That's quite frankly the decision. On the other side of that, the at-grade cost—this is without the tunnel—was listed by the Detroit River international crossing team as costing around \$920 million. So it's four times more expensive to build a tunnel. That's the issue. That's the issue where there's a lack of leadership and decisiveness. There's a lack of presence at the cabinet table.

All of this lack of decisions and having a vision is affecting the very economy of Ontario. Not just the auto sector—it's the main link for the manufacturing sector of this province to our major trading partner. And what sector is suffering in this province? The manufacturing

sector has lost almost 150,000 jobs when McGuinty's been in government. Not all of them are caused because of the health tax, the \$2.5 billion they grabbed out of people's pockets, hard-working families; or the capital tax. I could go on about the other taxes they have increased. I'll leave that to others, because there is a budget debate tonight, and I look forward to having an opportunity tonight to bring some more detail that I'll try to relate to this important lack of decision.

I think it took Howard Hampton, the leader of the NDP, to bring forward this resolution and try to get some answers, at least some glimmer of hope. We have it from Lawrence Cannon, Stephen Harper and Jim Flaherty in their budget. It's there. We have it from the Leader of the Opposition. You have it here today linking the plan, going back to the 200 to 2006 plan. I have the books, which I've shared with members, on the capital plan. There's nothing in there—nothing. I have them. They're not in there. There's nothing. There are a few words, and a bit of pavement that was all paid for when Frank Klees was minister.

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: The member for Ottawa-Orléans is laughing. I think he is an engineer and I think he also may be the parliamentary assistant to this file. Get the briefing. In fact, I take it from your remark that you are challenging your own ministry personnel. This capital project outlines all projects in that area. There is nothing—this is important. I want to file this as confirmed information from the ministry, accurate information. There is absolutely nothing from the McGuinty government, despite what his seals—the trained animals here—say. There's nothing.

If they get up to say more, it's like one of the promises they made during the election. Don't trust it. I'm telling you, it's in the book. It's outlined, project by project. There are a few kilometres of asphalt, period. There's the map. There's Windsor. There's nothing. You're absent. Mr. Hampton must have spotted this, and I give him full credit. I've tried to relate this to the lack of decision-making at the cabinet table with three members from that area at the cabinet table. Nothing happening. I see the Minister of Energy still here. He's a good member and works hard, and on the energy file he's been misled by someone on the coal file.

Interjections.

Mr. O'Toole: No, by someone—

The Acting Speaker: No, no. To be fair, I just want you to be very careful with your words. I recognize that you did not allege the minister was misleading but that he was misled, but please be very careful.

Mr. O'Toole: That's exactly—you did point out that I said it correctly. That's what I meant. I think he had an advisory crew. But Mr. Yakabuski, our critic in that area—I should know—from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, asked the minister a question, and it plays every day on the parliamentary channel. "Minister, tell us the names"—

Interjection.

1700

Mr. O'Toole: The Minister of Energy, who works hard on the file—it's a complex file; I appreciate that and I respect that too—was asked in estimates to provide the list of the advisers who told him he could close the coal plants by 2007. In the estimates process that member from Windsor promised to deliver to this House the names of those advisers. To date, he has refused. Yet in their election booklet, that maroon booklet they had, full of all of the mistruths—is that an appropriate word?—but promises. In that booklet they had 143 commitments, one of which was to close the coal plants by 2007. I'm listening. There's silence. They've changed that three times.

On the border, not only have they not made a promise—the only reason they haven't is because they'd probably break it—they have no plan. That's what's lacking, quite frankly, in this government on a consistent basis that I observe every day.

After 121 questions on the Lottogate, no answer, no plan and complete avoidance of any accountability and transparency at all. For a government that ran on those very principles, they run for cover. The minister has been out of the House a bit; Dalton has been away for a few days. In fact, the Deputy Premier today had to take all six or seven questions on this issue.

Now, I guess I want to recognize the work that has been done by others. As I said, the members here from the government side, I feel sorry for them, because they either haven't been up to the job or have failed to do the job. Either way, I question—there's an article here about the next election and what the members Dwight Duncan and Sandra Pupatello should do. They should tell the people—in fact, there's an editorial piece here about one of the members, asking them to be straightforward: “Just tell me the answer, whether you want the tunnel or you want the above-grade.” That's what they're asking for. This is being debated. I believe this very issue is the top megaproject in this province. It's the top megaproject in their ridings.

Where are they? “I know nothing, I see nothing, I say nothing.” It seems to be the standard mantra of a government in decline. The closing days, the last few days of the World Series, and they're not at the game. That's the problem. I think they're out preparing notes or something.

In my brief time—in fact, my speaking time has been cut, unfortunately, because there was only 41 minutes. So I'm explaining to the viewers that normally I'd have made my points more thoroughly if I had been given more time.

Quite frankly, this is from a blog site. It's on one of the reports involved in this file. It's called the WindsorCityOn blog. This blog continually—ritualistically actually—talks about that issue. It's the number one issue—they can't imagine. They say they read the Windsor Star. They must be reading the Windsor Star from another country, because if they did, they would be up on their feet today voting for Mr. Hampton's resolution on behalf of the people they're elected to rep-

resent, the people who pay them. No, they're being whipped into a responsible, disciplined—do anything, avoid everything.

The blog goes on. “The real news about Senator Kenny's report”—and this is a blog, so it does deserve to be recognized as such. “I hope you are hungry and thirsty because I have a lot for you to read.... I hope you're having your breakfast ... the Kenny report on ‘Border Crossings’ that I have copied and pasted below.

“You may even be shocked by testimony I quote from the last go-round at the Senate committee hearings” on this issue “which may help explain the fun and games we are suffering through in Windsor from inaction. It may also explain why the Bridge Co. is being persecuted.

“Now I will bet that you are surprised by what I said compared with the Star coverage”—because the Star is covering this thing in detail. “Sure the report talked about customs officers spending less time ‘looking for extra bottles of duty-free whisky and more time trying to identify people who might be a genuine threat to Canada.’”

The thing goes on to say that who's missing from the whole thing are the two ministers that I named before.

So this opposition day motion points out an important lack of leadership and ability to make difficult decisions. Dalton McGuinty and Minister Cansfield and the three ministers from that area: “I know nothing, I see nothing and I say nothing.” Quite frankly, I look forward to their statement to be to vote in support of Mr. Hampton's motion.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): I'm delighted to be able to rise today to speak for a few minutes on this important motion put forward by my leader, the member for Kenora-Rainy River. I will be echoing some of the comments made by my colleague from Parkdale-High Park. I know that my comments will then be followed by contributions from a couple of my other colleagues here on the NDP side of this House. I'm also glad to see that our two colleagues from across the way representing Windsor have joined us for the debate, and I'm hoping that their contributions subsequent to mine will perhaps shed some light on the inaction, the inertia of their government on this particular issue.

If Windsor is to be represented as the mine shaft and the Ontario economy is the canary, then I would suggest that there are ominous signs ahead for all of us, because the health of Windsor signifies in many ways a precursor to the health of the entire province. And what we're seeing right now is a worrying, disturbing trend.

I want to start off my comments by reading a couple of quite worthwhile paragraphs from a recent article that appeared in the Globe and Mail:

“Windsor's unemployment rate is nearly in the double digits.

“Companies, especially manufacturers, are shutting their doors or treading a fine line of solvency. The bingo halls have turned out the lights. Charity money is drying up. The food bank is busier than ever.”

It goes on: “Food bank usage is up, charities have had to cancel programs, the downtown theatre has had to

hand over its keys to the city, and there's a growing sense of desperation among business."

Those are signs of a key city, a proud city in this province, that is looking for answers, that is looking for action. I'm pleased to be able to stand shoulder to shoulder with the proud residents of Windsor today by supporting this motion and calling for that action. The people of Windsor have taken an active interest in this issue, on the need for an additional international border crossing. I understand from reading the local newspaper that just in February, in fact, more than 1,000 of them came out to a public meeting to convey their thoughts and views on what they see as being the logical solution to this problem. And as my leader from Kenora-Rainy River has pointed out, it is a tunnelling option. The 1,000 people who came out to that meeting made their views quite clear.

I was glad to see that just last week the members of the city council of Windsor followed suit and spoke on behalf of their constituents and voted unanimously to endorse tunnelling as the solution to the traffic woes that plague that city and in fact plague the entire province. I say "plague the entire province" because Windsor is an economic gateway for all of Ontario. It gives us access to the Midwestern US market and further afield. Each and every day, 10,000 big rigs cross both to the US and to Canada.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): They try to.

Mr. Ferreira: Or they try to, as my colleague from Hamilton East says. And that represents an enormous impact on our economy. In fact—this figure may have been quoted earlier, but I think it's important to quote it again—in the Windsor region alone, it impacts 150,000 jobs and provides \$13 billion in annual production just on that traffic.

My riding of York South-Weston may be separated by four or five hours' distance, depending on how fast you drive on Highway 401—

Interjection.

Mr. Ferreira: I always drive the speed limit, and I want to thank my colleague from Hamilton East for pointing that out and reminding me of that fact. We may be four to five hours separated, but in fact the border crossing at Windsor has a tremendous impact on the people in my riding. Hundreds of my constituents are directly employed in the trucking industry, and they pilot some of those big rigs that regularly cross that border. But it also affects manufacturers and other enterprises in my riding that need access to the US market through the 401 corridor. I can tell you that in my riding we have seen the loss of thousands of well-paying manufacturing jobs just over the past few years, and some of these companies have located elsewhere in North America. One of the reasons that they quote for pulling up stakes and for taking away the jobs is, frankly, the haphazard situation that we're currently facing with border crossing, specifically at Windsor-Detroit. It speaks to why this is an issue that has profound importance across the entire province, indeed from Windsor all the way across to eastern Ontario.

1710

We have a government that has been unable or unwilling to address this issue. This is despite the fact that on their front bench are two senior ministers from Windsor. I see that the local newspaper has taken them to task for the inaction, the lack of action to address this issue. It's interesting that it's my caucus, led by the member from Kenora-Rainy River, that is showing a real interest in furthering a solution that would help the people of Windsor and, by extension, the people of the entire province of Ontario.

There was an interesting editorial that appeared in the Windsor Star about five or six weeks ago. It points out the failings, perhaps the negligence, of those two senior members of the government opposite. I want to quote the last two paragraphs, which are quite insightful:

"Duncan and Pupatello have been mute and meek on this file for too long. They have a voice and they have a duty to speak on behalf of this region and its residents. They shouldn't be content to let bureaucrats do the talking for them. Especially when those bureaucrats can't get the facts straight. The fate of a project that will define this community for generations to come is simply too important.

"Duncan and Pupatello need to take an aggressive stand. They have dithered for too long already. Standing on the sidelines is no longer good enough."

We'd like to see some leadership from the members on the side opposite. We haven't seen it to date. The leadership has been coming from here. I'm glad that my friend from Durham, who made some very insightful comments, acknowledged that in his comments—the leadership that my leader from Kenora-Rainy River has shown on this particular file. He's been joined, as we know, by our two very capable New Democrat members of Parliament from Windsor, Mr. Masse and Mr. Comartin, who have similarly called for action and for leadership on this file, which we have not seen for the past three and a half years from this government. It doesn't surprise me, because in the budget that we saw tabled here just a couple of weeks ago, we didn't see much in the way of solutions on housing, on transit, on some of the most important and vital issues facing the people of this province. So it shouldn't surprise anyone that we haven't seen any action or talk of action or a plan or a strategy to deal with this most important issue of an added border crossing at Windsor.

I know that a couple of my colleagues want to have some time, and I do want to be generous in giving them some time at the end. But as I say, I am pleased and proud to stand up in this House and speak on behalf of the people in Windsor. I believe that they have a number of things in common—dreams, aspirations and goals—with the people of York South-Weston. I know that my colleagues here in the NDP caucus will continue to effectively and forcefully speak out for their interests and for a better life for the people of Windsor.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): To the request about what I'm going to do on this, I'm going to

vote against what is a pandering piece of poppycock. It fails to deal with facts; it fails to acknowledge the work and effort that has gone into the border file at Windsor; and it fails to acknowledge that members from Toronto can come to Windsor and tell us all they want and pretend to feign that they care—we know they don't. It's cheap grandstanding.

I want to give you a bit of a history lesson, just so everyone in the House understands what actually happened here. When this party came to office in 2003, the previous government had committed to a nine-point plan that would have seen trucks go across the E.C. Row Expressway, through the heart of our city, leading to an above-grade crossing that would have taken traffic through a tunnel under the river. We proudly killed that. We killed it because it was wrong for our community, and our community had spoken out strongly against it.

In order to deal with this appropriately, we had to assess—because what the NDP is asking us to do is not do an environmental assessment. That's what the DRIC process is. They may not understand that, and their wording certainly leaves them a lot of outs, including tunnelling. But they're saying with this resolution, "Kill the environmental process."

Let me tell you what the DRIC process has already done. It has eliminated almost 20 options that would have gone through other parts of our community. Do they want those back on the table? They might, because they don't know our community. These members from Toronto don't know Windsor; they don't understand it. I worked in an auto factory. I spent time there. My neighbours are being laid off, and no government is standing up more forcefully than this government is. I'll just remind my friends opposite of what Mr. Hargrove has said about this government. Buzz Hargrove says that the Dalton McGuinty government is the only government that understands the auto sector.

The leader of the third party, not one to let the facts get in the way of a good grandstand, suggested there was no mention of the Windsor border in the budget. I will table pages 89, 90 and 91 of the budget, which clearly identify the border, which clearly earmark money for it, and remind the New Democrats in the House that they voted against the 2005 budget, which included money for the border. They voted against providing money for the border crossing. They voted against the money for the roadbed capacity leading to the border.

They throw in some other straw men. They raise the issue of tolls. There's been no talk about tolls. We have publicly said that the people of Windsor won't have to pay tolls. We have publicly said that tunnelling is still being considered under the environmental assessment, and when that report is done, and I expect it will be done soon, we will address it. Then we'll see. I can tell you that the people in my community—we've had hundreds of meetings. I believe the minister told me there have been more than 175 public meetings on this issue. I've had the opportunity to attend many of them, unlike Mr. Hampton, who has attended none. We will respond when

our community sees that, when the environmental assessment is complete.

Maybe the NDP missed this morning's Detroit Free Press. I suspect they did, because they didn't read the budget; they didn't read the three pages of reference here. We were reminded today that the mayor of Detroit and the governor of Michigan want to kill the DRIC process. They want to twin the Ambassador Bridge. They would like nothing more than for this Legislature to pass Mr. Hampton's resolution, which will give them an out, which will set us back years. I won't be party to that. I won't be party to a resolution that will harm my community. I won't be party to cheap grandstanding by Toronto members trying to scrounge up votes in the next election. I'll take our position to the people during the election and I will have a position that will respond to the needs of our community.

You know, the NDP opposed it when we expanded Casino Windsor. They said no, that was too much money. They voted against it. They voted against the new medical school we're putting in our community. They voted against putting the money there. They voted against it. They sent Toronto members into Windsor, pretending they know something about our community. They don't.

1720

So I look forward to that report coming out, and I look forward to continuing to work with our city council, our mayor, as we have all along. Once I hear their response to the DRIC recommendations, I will take my community's voice to the cabinet table, to the Legislature, to the people of Ontario, and with the Honourable Sandra Pupatello and Bruce Crozier, we'll do what's right for Windsor. We won't grandstand, we won't take the petty shots, and we won't set the process back the way the New Democrat Party wants to.

I stand proudly ready in this House today, ready to vote against this cheap stunt that does nothing but pander. It does about the same amount as the federal NDP have done on the border file: absolutely nothing. The fourth row of the fourth party—no voice in Ottawa, none whatsoever.

I want to congratulate the federal government and the federal finance minister—and I see his successor, shall we say? The federal government is committed to paying for the Canadian half of the new border crossing. They committed \$400 million to the roadbed capacity leading to the border. Now, they're not clear whether that's the final amount of money they're prepared to put into the roadbed capacity. They've pledged \$400 million. We've asked them to clarify that and we haven't had a response yet. One official said yes; one official said no. I wrote to the finance minister, and we'll look forward to his agreeing to pay the rest of their share, which is considerably more, especially if tunnelling is the chosen option.

I want to finish with a couple of quotes from some Windsor city councillors and what they have to say. I'm going to start with—if I can find them here, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection: Make them up. That's what the NDP does.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Yes, the NDP would make them up, but I don't want to do that.

Councillor Bill Marra has said that he counts on and trusts Dwight Duncan, Sandra Pupatello and the McGuinty government to do what's right for Windsor. He was the author of the tunnelling motion, which doesn't, by the way, define whether it should be entirely tunnelled; it doesn't define that. The New Democrats wouldn't know that because they really don't know the issue. They're johnny-come-latelies. They don't get it. They send Toronto members down. They send down people who don't know our community—people who have never worked in an auto factory, people whose neighbours aren't getting laid off—and try to pretend that they know what they're doing.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: They try to pretend they know what they're doing, and they don't. They don't know what they're talking about.

I will acknowledge that Councillor Marra has been a supporter of our party, but let me talk about Councillor Alan Halberstadt, who has on many occasions criticized this government. I'd invite NDP members to go to his blog—it's up today—talking about pandering, talking about grandstanding, talking about the challenges we are dealing with.

In three years, we have moved this file forward. We have done so with the community every step of the way. We have invested over \$300 million in the border already. We're doing projects that no previous government contemplated, even though they were asked to do them.

So I look forward to the DRIC recommendation, I look forward to my community's response, and, most of all, I look forward to continuing to work with Bruce Crozier and Sandra Pupatello to defend the interests of our community—and, by the way, the interests of this entire province, because that border crossing has been and continues to be our government's top capital priority.

Mr. Bisson: I always look forward to the comments from my good friend the Minister of Energy. He professes so loudly in his comments in regard to this debate about the position that New Democrats have taken, both locally as far as Mr. Comartin and Mr. Masse but also what the provincial NDP caucus has put forward today in the name of our leader. I would say that he professes very loudly because I think he's got a lot to answer for in the community of Windsor.

The reality is that I remember—je me souviens—this very same member would stand in the House when the Conservatives were in government and the Conservatives couldn't move fast enough on this issue. They were challenging the government to do what needed to be done in order to get the next crossing across the river into Windsor at lightning speed. They criticized the then-Ernie Eves government for putting money forward in a budget that they said didn't meet the needs of the

community to get where it had to go in the timely fashion necessary.

Then they got elected. Well, they did what most Liberals do: They say one thing during an election, and then, if they're fortunate enough to be able to form a government, they say something quite different. That's what has happened here. In three and a half years, this file has not moved forward. We are bringing forward this motion on behalf of the community of Windsor because many people in the community feel that this government has not taken the action necessary to move this file forward.

I am heartened by the fact that the Minister of Energy was so upset today, because it tells me that he's feeling it back home and that, in fact, a number of people in the community of Windsor—and I would argue that it might be a larger crowd today than it was yesterday—are recognizing that this government is basically setting something up that's going to be akin to another of those election promises that were made in the previous election.

I want to be clairvoyant. I don't often profess to be clairvoyant, but this time I will. I want to think into the future about what might happen.

The Liberals, in opposition, when Mr. Duncan was the opposition member from Windsor, and, I believe, Madam Pupatello—I'm not sure; I'd have to go back and look at the Hansard—professed that the Conservative government wasn't moving fast enough on this particular file and that if we were to elect a Liberal government, things would happen.

Here we are; it's the last hour of this government's life. We're in the last session. This is the last chance they get at fixing this. They brought a budget forward, the fourth budget of this government, and nowhere in the budget is the money to fix this problem, and they've had three and a half years to do so. Where have they been?

So here's what they're going to do. I want to be clairvoyant. I know I've not been known to be clairvoyant. I feel an election promise coming, and I feel a press conference coming, and it's going to be in Windsor, and it's going to be in, oh, maybe August 2007, and Premier McGuinty will stand along with the Minister of Energy, Mr. Duncan, and along with the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, Madam Pupatello, and they might even invite Mr. Bruce Crozier from the backbench, if Dwight and others will let him stand there, and they're going to say, "In the next term, we're going to fix this problem."

Give me a break. We can't fall for that twice. People understand, and that's why people in Windsor are saying, "We want to see action now. We don't want to wait for another election promise that you may break if you're lucky enough to form the next government," which I think in this case ain't a guarantee, for sure. People want to see this government, in this term, take some action.

What did they want? They wanted to see in this budget a commitment to fixing this problem. Was it there? No, it wasn't. They want to see something concrete, where the government is prepared to do something to move this forward, and they haven't done it up to now.

So I stand in support of my leader, Mr. Howard Hampton, with regard to this particular motion. It's a very simple motion. I'll read it again, and I want members of the government to really understand that what we're asking for here is nothing short of what you promised in the last election:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the 2007 Ontario budget fails to address the pressing need for border infrastructure in the Windsor region; and

"That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government must immediately"—and the word is "immediately," not "for the next election"—"commit to funding the Windsor-Detroit corridor infrastructure, including tunnelled access to the next border crossing, and guarantee that there will be no toll roads.

"Addressed to the Premier of Ontario."

I say to my friends in the Liberal caucus—I didn't say "good" ones; I said "friends," because you'd only be good if you kept your promise—you need to do it now. We don't want to see another press event in August 2007 where you're going to promise something yet again, and should you be elected to government—which is not guaranteed at this point—you're just going to lead them to the altar, as you did in the previous election, and break yet another promise.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? Further debate? Is there any further debate?

Seeing no further debate, Mr. Hampton has moved—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: There was no further debate. You've missed the time. I asked three times; there is no further debate.

Mr. Hampton has moved opposition day motion number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1730 to 1740.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Hampton has moved opposition day motion number 2. All those in favour, please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine

Ferreira, Paul
Hampton, Howard
Horwath, Andrea
Kormos, Peter
Martel, Shelley

Martiniuk, Gerry
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Savoline, Joyce
Tabuns, Peter

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and be recorded by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chan, Michael
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter

Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard

Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Takharr, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 15; the nays are 48.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion to be lost.

The business of this afternoon now having been completed, this House stands recessed until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1743.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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No. 155B

N° 155B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 11 April 2007

Mercredi 11 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 11 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 11 avril 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House related to Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters, when Bill 187 is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs; and

That the standing committee on finance and economic affairs shall be authorized to meet, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, on April 25, 2007, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and following routine proceedings until 6 p.m. if needed for the purpose of conducting public hearings on the bill and that the committee be further authorized to meet on May 1, 2007, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and following routine proceedings for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 p.m. on April 27, 2007. No later than 5 p.m. on May 1, 2007, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than May 2, 2007. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That at 5:50 p.m. or 9:20 p.m., as the case may be, on the day that the order for third reading of the bill is called as the first government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, except in the case of any vote deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h), the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Caplan has moved government notice of motion number 323. Mr. Caplan.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: It's indeed a pleasure to join in the debate. I did not have a chance earlier to speak to the budget motion, which was in fact supported and endorsed by members of this House. I think it was quite an outstanding budget that the finance minister presented to this House.

I reflect back on previous budgets where this government has rolled up its sleeves to deal with a health care deficit, an education deficit, an infrastructure deficit and now, of course, a social deficit that was unfortunately left by previous governments. This government has taken decisive action to deal with lowering wait times, lowering class sizes, rebuilding the province of Ontario, and now helping and supporting those Ontarians as they seek the aspirations which we all have for ourselves, for our children and for our children's children.

1850

These budgets, taken together, speak to the values of all Ontarians. I know in my portfolio as Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal I've had the great pleasure to work with my colleague ministers and with all members of this House to literally rebuild—in fact, just in the past weeks we've had wonderful groundbreakings at the Sudbury Regional Hospital, in North Bay, and soon to be in Belleville, in Sarnia and in Sault Ste. Marie; indeed, literally over 105 hospital projects from one end of this province to the other. I see that the member for Parkdale—High Park, of course, would want me to note that the Runnymede hospital too will be rebuilt because of the actions of these budgets.

These are important works, but it doesn't just end there. Transit, of course, is an enormous priority which was found in this budget: extensions of subways, extensions of roadways, significant investment in our borders, our number one priority.

I want all Ontarians to understand how in education, health care, infrastructure and the social fabric of this province it's not just fine words, but actions and resources that are behind those words.

I'm hoping that all members will support this motion and support the budget bill when it does come to a vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight, although I'm disappointed that it is a time allocation bill.

There are two things I want to put on the record early in the debate, and they're very important to me. I want to let the House and all Ontarians know that the riding I represent, Simcoe North, is now home to the world curling champions. I'm extremely proud of these guys: skip Glenn Howard; vice Richard Hart; second Brent Laing; lead Craig Savill; alternate Steve Bice; and the coach, Scott Taylor. They all curl out of the Coldwater curling and recreation centre, which is the home of—I should point out, I don't know how many of you folks have fundraisers in curling, but I have a fundraiser called The Tories Rock and it helps me each year raise funds. I can tell you that I'm extremely proud of the fact that the Coldwater Curling Club is host to the world champions. They've done a remarkable job.

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: Glenn Howard and his brother Russ have remarkable careers in curling. I'm hearing some comments from opposite. I guess they're jealous or they don't even know what curling is, but curling is a great Canadian sport.

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing to hear—

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, order.

Mr. Dunlop:—the Liberal members heckling me on the world champions of curling, you know? You would think the least they could do is support a sport like curling in our wonderful country and our wonderful province. And I've got to tell you that all of north Simcoe, all of Ontario—with the exception of a few people in the House tonight, most Canadians are very much behind Team Glenn Howard and their accomplishments of a couple of weeks ago.

I also want—

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: That's not true. We are very proud of our Canadian curling team. Very.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order, and Meghan Agosta on the women's national team is from the riding of Essex, too, but there we go.

Mr. Dunlop: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I apologize if I took your heckling out of context. It sounded like you were against Team Howard. But I can tell you that we are very proud of him.

The other thing I wanted to bring to the attention of the House is that this coming weekend, and I think a lot of people probably know this—maybe a lot of you members are involved in the Zehrs MS walkathon, raising a lot of money for multiple sclerosis. I happen to be an honorary chair. It sounds like Mr. Levac, the member for Brant, is also. Get out and support this. I can tell you it's something we're proud of in our communities. Each year we raise more and more money and we draw more attention to this disease. What's really important is that year after year we see a lot of participants who actually have MS, and I can tell you that they're out there doing the best they can, raising money and drawing attention and, of course, drawing more and more people into this walkathon.

Tonight we're here debating the time allocation motion. I find it almost disgusting, after only three days of debate on this budget—a \$91-billion budget—that here we are, bringing debate to closure. I know a lot of my members wanted to speak to this bill. I don't know what the rush is, but when I look at what's happened in the past few days in the House here—the leadership we've seen on Lottogate, the complete lack of respect for this House as far as the actions of the Premier and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, who actually moved this closure motion. I feel somewhat let down by this Parliament. We're falling behind in our respect for the actions of government and for the actions of the people that we represent here in the province of Ontario.

I want to talk a bit about this whole idea of the minister's responsibility in this House. I look back at three particular cases. I think we've asked 122 questions—I could be wrong on that—around this whole area of Lottogate. In a lot of cases, the questions have been around the minister's actions and his refusal to step aside while some kind of an investigation takes place. And I keep thinking of the evening—and maybe some of you folks can help me; maybe Mr. O'Toole can as well—when one of our members made a statement and named a young offender in this House. I can tell you that Rob Sampson, who was the minister of corrections and not even present at the time—Rob Sampson, who I have a great deal of respect for—stepped aside because the name of a young offender was used in this House.

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: Bob Runciman stepped aside because the name of a young offender was used in a throne speech. Now we have what we consider to be a scandal taking place, and what's happening? The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the Premier are hiding behind an Ombudsman's report. I find that disgusting, I find it disgraceful for the actions of this parliament, and I think we've certainly lowered the bar as far as what people expect from their parliamentarians.

I want to talk about the budget and what I feel are areas that are strong. The first two things I'm going to

say are what I consider to be somewhat positive in how they impact my riding. I want to be upfront about this because I know that we always talk about all the negatives on each side, but I was happy with the fact that the government plans on rebuilding the Oak Ridge facility at Penetanguishene. That's part of the divestment program that's been going on for about the last 10 years. I can tell you that we are happy that that is taking place. It's important that those jobs will remain in Penetanguishene. Although there was an 18-month delay in the process, I'm still happy that they've made the announcement and will go ahead with that at some point. I'm expecting it to start this year, and I'll be pleased if it does. If it could start even over the next 18 months, I'd be happy as well.

The other thing that I thought was fairly positive for a program that I'm very supportive of—and I attended a function tonight—is the increase in some funding for the Ontario Trillium Foundation. I think we can all use more money in that program. I think it's a great program and it has been for 25 years; they're celebrating the 25th anniversary tonight. I can tell you that that money is well spent, particularly by the people in my community. I go to announcements all the time and I certainly take part in the applications and supporting the organizations. I'm happy that more money will flow into that particular area, because it is an area that I consider to be somewhat important to a lot of the small organizations in our communities.

1900

Then we get to the areas that I look at as a member of provincial Parliament for the riding of Simcoe North and the strong support we receive in the county of Simcoe. I take a look at what has happened with some of the restructuring—and I see the Minister of Municipal Affairs is here tonight. We talk about the leapfrogging. I know he's very proud of his greenbelt legislation. If I was the minister in that particular area, I would probably be promoting it as much as possible. But I can tell you—

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): You voted against it.

Mr. Dunlop: I hear the minister heckling me. I can tell you why I voted against it. It's because there was no plan put in place for the leapfrogging effect that would be caused by the implementation of the greenbelt legislation. What has happened is that the developers are leapfrogging over the greenbelt, and they're going into other areas. One of the prime areas is the county of Simcoe. I'm going to tell you that we did not see in this provincial budget any type of assistance that would indicate that the government supports the infrastructure that has to be put in place in the county of Simcoe as a result of the leapfrogging development. When you start adding 300,000 or 400,000 people, almost doubling the size of a population of the size of the county of Simcoe, we have a real problem. I'm going to tell you, we need infrastructure investment, and that means things like highways, sewer and water, hospitals, schools, landfills—you name it. We absolutely have to have that. That was not part of the budget. I thought, as the government rolled out their

budget close to the election, that we would see at least something in that. I was disappointed in that, and I know a lot of the municipal mayors and councillors are extremely disappointed that although there was some money set aside a few days ago for some rural infrastructure, it's a pittance compared to the kind of money you need to handle 300,000 people.

The second thing—

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: The second thing, and I know I'm getting under their—already they're upset with my comments. I'm only asking that Simcoe county be treated fairly. I don't think there's anything wrong with that. The second thing, of course, is the environmental protection of Lake Simcoe. The federal government found a way to find \$12 million. I thanked Jim Flaherty, the Minister of Finance for the federal government. I thanked Stephen Harper. They found \$12 million to help out on a national water strategy, and \$12 million went to Lake Simcoe.

We in this House passed a resolution unanimously—it was my resolution—asking for Lake Simcoe to be considered a priority. That was only last fall, on November 23. Surely they hadn't forgotten that by the time of the budget, March 22; obviously they have, because Lake Simcoe wasn't mentioned. I would have expected at least \$12 million to equal the federal investment. The leapfrogging effect of development will have a direct result on Lake Simcoe. It will have a major impact on Lake Simcoe, and I think we have to address it. I have to put on the record tonight that I'm disappointed that it didn't happen. My time is going here quickly.

Agriculture: \$191 million cut from the budget. I don't think this is propaganda, because it's a government document. But everybody who has seen Update 2000, the glossy brochure put out by—it's nothing more than Liberal propaganda. It's absolutely sickening, and in here they make it sound like the farmers support the government. Do you know what? I talk to farmers every day, and do you know what they tell me? The Ministry of Agriculture and Food, what they call One Stone Road, has become a joke for the farmers, a complete joke. It's nothing but a bureaucratic nightmare. They're centred only on themselves. They do not care about farmers. They put out glossy brochures—Strong Rural Communities. Talk to the farmers. All you rural members should start talking to your agricultural friends, because they don't believe for one second—

The Deputy Speaker: Hold that up one more time and we'll have it taken away.

Mr. Dunlop: Pardon me?

The Deputy Speaker: Hold that up one more time and we'll have it taken away as a prop.

Mr. Dunlop: I really apologize. I thought a provincial document, in this House, was—

The Deputy Speaker: No, no. I'm not going to debate. We just don't allow props, and I would appreciate it if you would get on with the debate.

Mr. Dunlop: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't need to put the prop up any more. I don't need to tell you that the

Liberal government probably spent a million dollars on this particular document, trying to build up rural communities, and what have they got out of it? A million dollars has been wasted. A million dollars that could have gone into the pockets of farmers in this province has been spent on Liberal propaganda, and I can't even raise that document in this House. That's pretty sad.

Second, around agriculture, we absolutely have had a disaster occur with the Ontario Harness Horse Association. I look at Georgian Downs.

I want to read from a document—and I hope I can read from something. I'm going to tell you that the Ontario Harness Horse Association has basically been left alone or ignored by the McGuinty Liberals since last fall. They lost a number of racing dates because a big company—I guess it's called the Great Canadian Gaming Corp.—has taken over a lot of the racetracks in Ontario. I can recall the slot programs going into the racetracks. The document said, "The slot program at racetracks is intended to promote live horse racing in the province and subsequently benefit the agricultural sector in Ontario and the OLG supports this endeavour." The source was the original site-holder facilities agreement. And now do you know what we've done? We've taken \$50 million out of the agricultural community. Not only \$191 million in the budget, but another \$50 million has been taken out of the harness horse races. They finally had to sign on the dotted line, and do you know why? They had to feed the horses. They had barns full of horses with no racing dates in places like Georgian Downs, and they gave up dates to sign.

The Minister of Government Services and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal knew all about this, and so did the president of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., and they let the farmers slip away. The McGuinty Liberals never came to the support of the harness racers, and I'm disappointed in that. You wrote all kinds of letters saying the lovely things you would like to do, but in the end the harness racers lost and agriculture lost in Ontario, to the tune of at least \$50 million a year, and I don't know how you're going to replace that.

But I'm going to tell you right now, if a John Tory government is elected this coming fall, I will do everything I can to replace those racing dates. I've been at all their meetings. I've seen the pain on the faces of the harness racers, as they wanted to get to back racing and they had to step aside while this agreement took place. What happened? A great big company from BC, the Great Canadian Gaming Corp., won and nobody stood behind the harness racers in Ontario.

I would like to talk about another failure that I noticed in the budget. I know you guys, you people on the other side, are really interested in my comments, and I'm glad to see you're all here enjoying this tonight. I'm disappointed the Premier didn't come to hear about this, but the closures of these regional centres—did anyone on that side think about this at all? Did anyone actually think what was happening?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: You started it.

Mr. Dunlop: Here they are. The minister is over there. They're heckling me. Do you know what? If they knew the whole history of this thing, they would be upfront with everybody, but the reality is that nobody closed the final three centres. No one closed Rideau, no one closed Southwestern and no one closed Huronia, because there was no plan put in place for where to put the people, the clients. It hasn't happened. It's still not happening. It's destroying communities.

I thought the very least this budget would do—the very least it would do—would be to maybe put some type of a master plan in place for the lands to maybe be able to help compensate the communities for the loss of millions of dollars. In the Huronia Regional Centre alone the loss of the payroll is \$30 million to our community, and that's just the payroll itself. There are all kinds of other organizations, other agencies, like Lakehead University, like Georgian College, like probably even the OPP, that would like to have access to some of that property. It hasn't happened. There's no master plan—the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal has been too busy ducking the questions in the House—and that's his responsibility. I think that we need to come straight with these communities like Smiths Falls and Chatham and Orillia and make sure that we can come up with good master plans to help compensate these communities for the loss of their payrolls.

1910

The reality is that who's really being hurt are the clients, the residents. A lady came into my office on Friday morning of last week. I met her specially at the office because it was Good Friday and she wanted to talk to me because she had to have this document signed. She has a brother at the Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia. All kinds of meetings have taken place without her permission. She mentioned to me that she's had some fairly heated arguments with the supervisors in that particular area. She mentioned one case to me, a fellow who had lived at the Huronia Regional Centre all of his life, and he'd been shipped off last week to Niagara Falls. She said it would bring tears to your eyes. She talked to a staff member who couldn't be identified because if you identify yourself and come forward, you've lost your job; you're out. But this person had dropped the person off at Niagara Falls and had mentioned that the conditions this gentleman was going to would actually bring tears to your eyes and how sad it was, the difference in the level of service from the Huronia Regional Centre to some kind of group home in the Niagara Falls area that she mentioned. It's not right, it's not fair, and it's inhumane. I'm completely disappointed that the government would make this decision and not really bring the families into the fold and, of course, not bring the communities in.

Of course, the ultimate shot was not having any kind of a master plan in the budget or in the budget bill that would help compensate these communities for these huge losses which are parts of the culture. I think we all know about Smiths Falls as well. It's the area that's lost the Hershey plant as well. Things are pretty tough up in that

area, and I think government has a responsibility to revisit all three regional centres and take a close look at them, and particularly to compensate the community as well.

I know I'm already over my time, but I felt it was important that these issues be put on the table. It's a time allocation motion. I have a number of members here tonight who want a chance to speak to this. They're not getting that opportunity. If you can imagine—this is not some pit bull legislation that you're trying to ram through. This is a \$91-billion budget, a budget that is costing the average taxpayer—every man, woman and child—an additional \$1,600 per year in increased taxes since the McGuinty government took power.

I guess the question most people would ask is, are they getting good value? You know what? I don't think they are. They're getting \$1,600 of propaganda that I can't put up in front of you. I've got a number of those pieces of propaganda, but I don't think the people are getting their value for a \$91-billion budget. I think there's too much waste. I think there's too much propaganda. I think there are many press conferences and press releases, re-announcements over and over and over again that would indicate this government is actually doing something.

What bothers me is when I look at the statistics from job creation in the country and I see that we've lost 130,000 jobs in the last 18 months, when I see we're now last on the list, when I see that we're one of the most overtaxed provinces in the country. I get worried about our future here. But you know what? I think the citizens of Ontario will have an opportunity on October 10 to change all that.

I want to say that I'm going to be fully behind our leader, John Tory. I want to elect John Tory as the new Premier. We've had enough of this nonsense. We've had enough waste.

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: We've had enough of the heckling and people who know nothing about what they're talking about. John Tory has a business background. He will make an excellent Premier for the province of Ontario. We're all going to get behind him, and I hope all Ontarians will get behind John Tory, make him the leader and get rid of this nonsense of increased spending of \$1,600 for every man, woman and child and not seeing any results from it.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): I listened with interest to my friend from Simcoe North, in particular to his discussion about time allocation. Certainly, this was a party that when Harris and Eves were in power railed against time allocation, especially on important bills, and now we see that they're following suit and bringing it in.

I'd like to take the bulk of my time in actually talking about the budget, but before I begin, I wanted to remind the House of a wonderful fairy story. It's one of my favourites. It's called the Emperor's New Clothes. We all know this, but perhaps we've forgotten some of the details of the story. I had, so I went back and refreshed

my memory. Basically, two swindlers come into a town. It's a town where the emperor is a little bit on the vain side. They had their work to do, but not too much work to do. Basically, they tell everybody—and I'm quoting right from Hans Christian Andersen himself—that they were weavers and they could weave the most marvellous cloth. Not only were the colours and the patterns and the material extraordinarily beautiful, but the cloth had the strange quality of being invisible to anyone who was unfit for his office or unforgivably stupid.

We probably all remember what happens after this, but a detail that is very interesting in the story to me is that these swindlers worked really hard. They're working night and day, they're always there, and whenever anybody asks them a question, they always have a ready answer. It's a ready answer about how beautiful the cloth is that they're weaving, how exquisite in detail it is. Again, they reiterate every time anybody questions them that somebody who can't see this cloth is clearly unfit for their office or unforgivably stupid.

So of course, we fast-track towards the end of the story, where the emperor is actually walking down the main street with the clothes, and we want to note that all the courtiers around the emperor are saying things like, "Oh, they suit you. A perfect fit," they all exclaim. "What colours, what patterns. The new clothes are magnificent." And the two gentlemen—a lovely little detail—of the imperial bedchamber fumble on the floor, trying to find the train, which they were supposed to carry. They didn't dare admit that they didn't see anything, so they pretended to pick up the train and held their hands as if they were carrying it. None of them were willing to admit that they hadn't seen a thing, for if anyone did, then he was either stupid or unfit for the job he held. Never before had the emperor's clothes been such a success—except, of course, for the little child. "But he doesn't have anything on," said the little child. And the little child's proud father said, "Listen to the innocent one." And the story ends happily. The people whisper among each other, repeat what the child had said, and then they all repeat in unison, "He doesn't have anything on. There's a little child who says he has nothing on."

Well, what we have in this budget is a very good rendition of Hans Christian Andersen's fable. What we have is a lot of jumping up and down. It was very interesting to see the Minister of Finance dancing up and down in his \$256 shoes, which were \$6 more than poor children get this year in July, exclaiming—again, the benches were full here, the galleries were full with a lot of people saying, "What a wonderful budget. What a budget for the poor."

I have this image of this little child in my riding, in all of our ridings, who is saying, "But it's not making any difference to my life whatsoever. The emperor has no clothes on. Nothing has changed," because as that little child woke up, what has changed?

First of all, this budget has not raised the minimum wage. All of those people in Ontario who are working at minimum wage, some 200,000 of them, two thirds of

them women, 1.2 million Ontarians who make under \$10 an hour, at the end of this week collect their paycheque, and guess what? No change, not one penny in change on the minimum wage.

Interestingly enough, even the promise—we have to remember that it is just a campaign promise for three years down the road when it will actually get to \$10.25, which is a princely sum of 75 cents a year for the poorest. We contrast this with the \$40,000 raise that the Premier gave to himself—75 cents a year. You know, the child cannot believe it—75 cents a year by 2010.

The whole point of the \$10 minimum wage now that has gained such momentum across the province is that this will actually take minimum wage earners just above the poverty line. Does this budget take minimum wage earners above the poverty line, even if you believe the promises in three years? No. Every single marker along the way, every single raise keeps minimum wage earners below the low-income cut-off, below the poverty wage. So ultimately a \$10.25-an-hour person working 40 hours a week would earn \$21,320, which is still below the low-income cut-off, still poverty. The child who looks at the emperor and says, “The emperor is not wearing any clothes,” is still going to be poor in three years.

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More bad news for that child who could actually see what's going on: This budget has not ended the clawback of the national child supplement. Again, I'm reading here from the Income Security Advocacy Centre, who should know because they work with poor children all the time. They answer very direct questions in the information they put out post-budget: Does the new Ontario child benefit end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement? The answer is very simple; the child who's looking at the emperor could understand it: No. When fully implemented in 2011, a single parent on Ontario Works with one child will be better off by \$50 a month, not \$122 a month, which is what they would get if this government ended the national child supplement clawback and which we have been asking for, which I have a resolution about, which anti-poverty activists across the province have been demanding ever since this government was in office and promised to do it back in 2003.

What else? This budget has not raised their ODSP or OW rates. How can I say that? Well, the budget has raised it 2%. Two per cent is not even the inflation rate. In fact, I'm going to read some excerpts from a wonderful document. This is the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' Ontario alternative budget and they say right here: “Families and individuals receiving social assistance—both Ontario disability support program ... and Ontario Works ... benefits—are actually receiving less in provincial benefits, when inflation is taken into account, than they were when the McGuinty government was elected in 2003.” That's shameful. That's appalling for the emperor who says he's wearing clothes. For the McGuinty government who says they brought in a poverty budget, this little child is naming it very clearly: “This emperor has no clothes.”

It goes on to say, “Ontario's poorest citizens had been falling behind for 10 years when the McGuinty government was elected. Nearly four years later, the poorest among us are still falling behind. Even the government's crystal-clear commitment to end the clawback of the federal child benefit supplement from the poorest Ontario families disappeared as it redefined the commitment as a promise to pass on only any increases in the child benefit supplement during its first term in office.” So the child is right yet again when it comes to ODSP or OW rates: no clothes.

This budget has not put one provincial penny into housing or child care. Child care is particularly lamentable because this government in 2003 promised \$300 million for child care. Instead, they get from the federal counterparts \$100 million. Guess what? They give \$25 million of it in this budget—no clothes, not a stitch of clothing, not one item of clothing that would answer the problem of poverty in this province, and particularly the answer in this case of child care. In fact, they're clawing back three quarters of the federal dollars that should be going for child care. That's the reality. That's what the child sees when this child sees this budget.

By the way, there are some very interesting numbers where housing is concerned: They got \$392 million from the federal government for housing, and in fact have only committed \$127 million of that for public housing. Again, they're clawing back money from the poorest citizens of this province. They're not giving money, not one penny. They're clawing it back.

It's interesting, because I received a communiqué from the tenants and community organizers supporting a tenants' campaign to address the issue of capital repair funding for Toronto Community Housing. You know, just the repairs in Toronto alone would cost \$300 million of community housing already built, just the repairs, and this government is allocating in this budget—this fake-clothing-on-the-emperor budget—\$127 million. That's not their money anyway, so it wouldn't even pay for the repairs on the housing we already have. Again, this is against a backdrop of 67,000—and I've recently heard 70,000—households in the GTA waiting for affordable housing and 122,000 households, not individuals, waiting for affordable housing in Ontario.

I had a woman e-mail me just today. She has three children and is a single parent. She has been waiting 10 years for affordable housing, and this budget is not going to make one iota of difference for the children in that house. That child in that house woke up this morning and said, “That emperor doesn't have any clothes on, not one stitch of clothes on.”

This budget has not given small business in this province any assistance. How can I say that? After all, the budget is full of spin on what they've done for small business. I was asking in my resolution that the business education tax be addressed. It's a clearly unfair tax on Toronto's small business. What did they do? They said, “Oh, well, we've eliminated it.” But then you read, of course, the fine print. You read what they've actually

done, not what they say they're wearing but what they're actually wearing. They ain't wearing nothing, as I've said before. They didn't do anything. The reality is that whatever they're going to do, they're going to do in seven years. Again, it's a campaign promise, not even worth the paper that it's printed on—no clothes.

I read from the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas, TABIA. They represent small retailers, small business across the city, and here's what they say:

"The provincial government taxes Toronto's commercial property to the hilt, with education levies that it uses elsewhere in the province. This overloads our membership, most of which is comprised of small retailers, with tens of millions of dollars in property taxes. Ever since the provincial government introduced current value assessment, most of these retailers have seen their property taxes increasing annually at rates which are double and triple the inflation rate. Between the annual assessment increases, usually 5%, plus the city's rate increases, 1.5%, many of these retailers are struggling to stay afloat.

"The provincial levy is hurting Toronto very badly," adds Mr. Miskin. "It is contributing to the erosion of the city's commercial base, making it more and more difficult for the city to raise the revenues it needs."

This is TABIA, the association of small business, under the title "Budget Fails Toronto Small Business." So that's small business.

This budget has not provided artists or cultural workers with protection, housing or tax relief. They have not provided status-of-the-artist legislation, even though that was something they clearly promised back in 2003. Today, we had a media event with the Ontario Federation of Labour representing their thousands of cultural workers, the Fashion Design Council of Canada—many in attendance, all very angry at what this government has produced, which is called the Status of Ontario's Artists Act, which is two flimsy little pages. All it says is basically, "We love artists. Aren't artists great? We'll dedicate a weekend for them in June." That's not what artists need. Again, a child who was the child of an artist might wake up this morning and say, "This emperor ain't got no clothes."

Here's what we're really looking for for artists. We're looking for "labour standards and taxation measures to immediately improve the working lives of artists in Ontario," who are among the poorest in Ontario, might I add.

"—protection for child performers": We have no legislation in this province that protects child performers. That's shameful. That's appalling.

"—access to training and professional development programs and funds;

"—tax measures favourable to artists: income averaging and/or certain exclusion of certain incomes from provincial taxes; and protections for senior artists."

We have artists here who one year—and you know that this is the life of artists—can make a great deal of money one year and the next year make nothing and have to pay taxes based on last year's income. This is clearly

and patently unfair and needs to be addressed. And of course, senior artists, like everyone else in the province, need affordable housing.

Finally, they ask for "a consultative process leading to the creation and enactment within 24 months"—remember, this was way back in 2003 that they were asking for this—"of an appropriate labour relations mechanism encompassing a collective bargaining procedure for ... professional artists and producers/engagers in the province of Ontario."

Did we get that? No, we did not. In fact, artists in this province got not much. Of course, this government values the amount of money that they did give. What they don't talk about is how the culture budget has been slashed and the fact that they've given back a very small percentage of what was slashed to those who need it most. Of course, those who need it most did not get what they asked for. They got half of what they asked for, or whatever the case may be.

Bottom line: Artists are no better off. Bottom line: The child of an artist woke up this morning, looked out at the emperor strutting down the street and said, "This emperor has no clothes."

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This budget has not put money into renewable energy or toward eliminating greenhouse gases. Nuclear reactors will still get over \$40 billion. Again, that's shameful.

So what was needed?

The government missed an opportunity to present a real green climate change plan. Instead, they promised that this spring the government will present a plan.

They also missed an opportunity to announce a major climate change initiative by closing Nanticoke, Ontario's biggest polluter. If there ever was a broken promise, that's it. They promised to close Nanticoke. Now, of course, we don't even get a promise in this budget. They're not even promising anymore.

So, again, a child who might be interested in possibly having a future, maybe a child with asthma in the city of Toronto, woke up this morning and looked at the emperor strutting down the street and said, "I don't know what everybody is so excited about, because"—no clothes.

This budget has not fixed the flawed funding formula that keeps our schools poor.

Let's look to—there's no one better—the students themselves: the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario.

The heading here is, "Ontario Budget Forecast for Students: Higher Tuition Fees and More Debt." That's what a child who is maybe a little older, who is going to university right now or looking at going to university one day, sees with the McGuinty government. They see higher tuition fees and more debt.

I'll quote Jesse Greener, the president of that organization: "This year the government heard overwhelmingly from students and their families that McGuinty's tuition fee increases were clawing back financial aid and closing the doors on many students from low- and middle-income families.... We are really surprised that McGuinty has ignored those voters"—and there are a lot of them.

They did a poll asking Ontario voters what they thought about tuition fee reductions, and 75% of Ontarians support tuition fee reductions. Jesse was really quite profoundly surprised that the McGuinty government ignored the 75% of Ontarians who asked for a break on tuition fees. That's sad, especially from someone who wants to dub himself the education Premier.

All voters have seen is a trail of broken promises.

All that child watching the emperor strut sees, as the education Premier is—you know what it is—is no clothes.

This budget has not uploaded the downloads, so our cities continue to struggle. This is a huge slap in the face for the city of Toronto, among other municipalities. What was presented here was really just that: a shameful slap in the face.

I hear from my councillor friends in the city of Toronto that the jury is in: They're not even going to get the \$71 million that the city is running short this year. Again, this is appalling. This government is literally starving my city, the city of Toronto, that I grew up in. It's starving my riding.

This is not even a partisan issue. There are Liberal members on city council who are absolutely appalled and shaken to the core. They thought that this government might actually listen to them. After all, they are members of the same party. But, no, this government is not listening to them. They're not even listening to members of their own party. They're not listening to the councillors in the city of Toronto.

They are starving the city of Toronto. That's what children woke up to this morning. We can only imagine how that's going to trickle down to the poorest children. The city is picking up the tab for what the province mandates, which is clearly and patently unfair.

It's hard to know where to go, but I do want to end on a positive note, because there is such a thing as real clothing. You don't have to cave in to the swindlers. You don't have to pretend to wear clothing. You can actually put on some real clothes and walk down the street so the child doesn't have to point at you and say, "Ain't got no clothes." You could actually bring in a budget that was really a budget for the poor in Ontario, small business, artists, the city, the environment, others.

First of all, what would it look like? It would immediately bring in a \$10-an-hour wage, but it wouldn't stop there. It would actually set it so that, annually, a person working 40 hours a week at the minimum wage would earn an amount equal to or greater than the low-income cut-off for a single person living in Toronto, as determined annually by Statistics Canada—a very simple thing to do. They could do it immediately; they don't do it immediately. There are all sorts of excuses given for why they don't do it immediately. They gave themselves a raise immediately—that was easy to do—but not for the poorest.

They could immediately eliminate the national child benefit clawback. They could immediately do that. They could simply pass along the money that they already

received to the province's poorest children. That would be so simple; the money is there. They don't have to raise any more; they don't have to tax any more. They just have to give the money they already received to the children for whom it is intended.

They could build housing. How about that? That's radical. That's clothing. They could build housing for the 122,000 who are waiting on those lists, who are waiting and dying, many of them, on the list for affordable housing, the 70,000 in the GTA alone who are waiting for affordable housing. They have \$392 million of federal dollars to do it. They could allocate all of that right off the bat. They could do that. And then maybe, just maybe, if they were a little bit generous, they could spend a penny or two of their own money, of provincial money, on housing. We certainly need it. With a poverty rate of 15% to 17% in the province, we certainly need it.

What could they do? They could upload the downloads and give small business a break. They could rationalize the business education tax, reform it—it is desperately in need of it—not to mention our property taxes, a whole other discussion, and I would definitely direct anybody watching this to ouchassessment.ca to see how easily that could be done. So give those who pay property taxes now a break and also give small business a break. And most importantly, give the city of Toronto a break and all the municipalities a break. If you're going to mandate social service programs, then you should pay for them. Even a child watching an emperor walk down the street could tell you that. If you're going to mandate programs and insist that the city carry out those programs, then you should pay for those programs. It's common sense.

Obviously, we need better health care. I haven't even touched on health care. I want to leave some time for my friend Gilles Bisson, who will be in a little later.

Certainly, there's post-secondary education. Freeze tuition fees. My goodness: Manitoba has done it; Nova Scotia has done it. It can be done. Give our students a break. The average debt is going to be around the \$30,000 mark. We heard earlier about young entrepreneurs. How can you be a young entrepreneur—imagine graduating from university and wanting to start a small business and being saddled with \$30,000 worth of debt before you even get out the door. Where are you going to get the funding then for your small business? You're going to be using every available penny just to pay off your student loans. It's kind of classic. I look at my own children: my daughter, who went through in social work and who makes more money as a bartender than she would as a social worker, and my son, who's going to graduate in East Asian studies. Because he's going to speak some Mandarin, his job opportunities are better in China than they are in Ontario. That's where we're exporting our brilliant young people: We're sending them to China. Most of his friends who graduate from university go to the Orient. Why? Because they can make more money there. They can teach English there, at least. Here, they can't get a job, not enough to pay back the

\$30,000 student loan that they are carrying; that's for sure.

And what can we do? We can close the coal-fired plants. This is an election promise whose time is well past due. And instead of putting \$40-billion-plus into nuclear energy, perhaps redirect that money to renewable energies, the things that we all learn in school: reduce, reuse and recycle, the three Rs. Perhaps they could do that, what they teach in school. Perhaps they could practise the three Rs themselves in terms of the environment, and perhaps they could meet Kyoto targets, simply meet Kyoto targets here provincially. This is what the world is demanding of us.

But there's a reason that they don't do any of this, and that's very clear. That comes across, because he who pays the piper calls the tune, and of course all of those people who are fawning over the emperor who is walking down the street with no clothes on have jobs to protect. I'm going to paraphrase what Upton Sinclair said. He basically said that people are loath to gain understanding when they get their salary from a lack of understanding. So we have to look at who is making money going along with the dance that the emperor is actually wearing clothes. Who is going along with the myth? Who's going along with the swindlers who say, "Oh, look at this brilliant budget. Look at the beautiful clothes the emperor is wearing"?

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Why are they doing that? Fear is a great motivator, but I have incredible faith in humankind. I have incredible faith in my colleagues across the floor. I have faith that they will not lockstep behind the emperor, that they won't all look at the emperor and say, "Yes, the emperor is wearing clothes." I have faith that they will actually exercise their democratic right and vote against not only this time allocation measure but against the budget itself because they see it for what it is. They see what the emperor isn't wearing. They can't help it. If they've actually read the document, they can't help but see it. They can't help but hear the voice of that small child who is still pointing at that man without clothes walking down the street. They can't help but hear from their constituents, who are saying: "Guess what? My paycheque still looks the same." "Guess what? My property tax bill still looks the same." "Guess what? I'm still paying business education taxes." "Guess what? Look at the environment; nothing is happening." "Guess what? Our schools still can't pay their heating bills." "Guess what? The city is struggling just to balance its budget." That child's voice, they can't help but hear.

So I have great faith that this will not be partisan; that people will do the right thing; that they will see what the emperor is not wearing, not what he pretends to wear; that they will vote against the time allocation measure; and that they will vote against the budget that isn't a budget for the poor, certainly not for small business, certainly not for artists, certainly not for the environment, certainly not for the city, certainly not for the health care system, certainly not for the education system, and

finally, certainly not for that small child, that child who actually tells the truth.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I'm going to take only a very limited amount of time because we certainly want to ensure that members have the opportunity to speak to the time allocation motion and/or the elements of the budget they might not have had the opportunity to speak to.

It's a particular pleasure to speak to a time allocation motion. I remember just after I was nominated in 2003, we had the Magna budget, and at that time there was no debate in the House. In fact, the budget wasn't in the House. How could you debate it? There was no real discussion about allocating time for debate because all the debate was around finding the government of the day in contempt of the Legislature. The budget got no debate. There were no committee hearings. So I'm pleased to stand and speak to the time allocation motion.

We're going to ensure that a few things happen: (1) that members have time to speak to the budget; (2) that we have the opportunity for committee to hear from the public in public hearings.

I want to give an example of some of the folks and the types of organizations we want to hear from in committee. That's why I want to have this in the standing committee, to have the hearings, to debate, so the committee can report back to the House. The kinds of folks we want to hear from in committee are folks like Len Crispino from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. We want to hear the kinds of things small business has to say, things like the reduction in the business education tax "will lead to increased productivity, job creation and output. Over 300 communities across the province will benefit from reduced industrial and commercial tax rates." I want to hear from the business community at committee, and I want other members of the Legislature on the committee to have that same opportunity. We didn't have the opportunity in 2003. We've had it since, and we want to have it in 2007.

I want to hear from the faculty at the colleges, from the likes of Anne Sado, who said, "We're pleased with the research funding.... We salute the Ontario government for actually making the funds available for the purposes for which they were intended."

I want to hear from the students at the colleges and universities. I want to hear from the likes of Tyler Charlebois, who said, "After 15 years of underfunding ... the McGuinty government is investing additional funds to renew our learning institutions for the future."

I want to hear from the public at committee, I want to hear from the members here, and I want to ensure this comes back with a committee recommendation for this House to debate yet again.

I want to hear from the health community. I want to hear from the likes of Dr. David Bach, the president of the Ontario Medical Association, who said, "Doctors Applaud Commitment to Expand Wait Time Strategy. The provincial government has made progress in reducing wait times."

I want to hear from the social sector. I want to hear from the likes of Jacqui Maund, Ontario coordinator, Campaign 2000. She said, "There are a number of steps forward taken in this budget that are key areas that we have been calling for."

I want the public to have a chance to say that to the standing committee, not just the discussion we have here. I want the chance to hear from education, I want a chance to hear from the likes of Hilda Watkins, the president of the Ontario Teachers' Federation: "Today's budget recognizes responsibilities beyond the school playground for improving student learning." We need to hear that at committee. The public of the province of Ontario need the opportunity, through committee, to be able to present to us.

I'm not sure how much time I've allocated, only about a very few minutes, but I definitely want to hear from the likes of those in the financial sector, such as Janet Ecker, a former member, and president of the Toronto Financial Services Alliance. She says, "By committing to legislation to eliminate the" capital "tax by 2010, the government will finally knock down this barrier to investment."

I can go on and list ad infinitum those out there in various sectors that come to this from the sectors they're engaged with, whether health or social services or business or financial services or education or students. We have the opportunity through this motion to allocate time at committee, a chance that didn't exist in 2003 for a committee to hear, for a committee to make a recommendation to this House to debate that matter before we get to the final vote on the budget bill. I hope at the end of the day that this House unanimously will see the value of the things we're putting in this budget and will find themselves in a position, after hearing from the public and hearing from their colleagues in standing committee, to actually support this budget when we bring it back for third and final reading.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Here they go again. For more years than I would care to admit, I've sat in this House and listened to the member for St. Catharines. No one would question his political stamina, given his 30 years of service in this House, most of which has been spent on this side of the House as opposed to the government side. No one would question his commitment to his constituents, having been re-elected by them so many times. No one would call into question his sense of the traditions of this House. And no one would question his loyalty to his beloved Buffalo Sabres. However, we must question: How many times while serving in opposition did he complain about any restrictions or limitations on debate, and how many times did he lament the bypassing of the democratic process, which he said was inherent in these kinds of time allocation motions?

This motion we're discussing tonight to curtail debate on Bill 187, the budget bill, stands in his name. He must accept political responsibility for its contents. He must explain why the government believes it is necessary to ram this bill through the House before all members who

may wish to speak to it have had a chance to do so. I have to say that so far, the case that has been put forward by the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge has not been very convincing.

This spring sitting of the Legislature will most likely be the final sitting of the 38th provincial Parliament of Ontario. In fact, six months from today, we will be taking down our election signs, a new Parliament having been elected the day before. This fact is not lost on the staff in the Premier's office and the Liberal Party's campaign team—none of whom have been elected but who are now calling all the shots in the McGuinty Liberal government. They are now in charge of all of the strategic and tactical decisions of the government, rendering the elected MPPs and even the executive council of Ontario redundant.

We know that the member for St. Catharines didn't dream up this time allocation motion. It originated in the Premier's office. We must ask, why the rush? Is it because they plan to shut the House down early, to deny the opposition the chance to hold them to account? The House calendar would have us here until the end of June. Are they planning to ignore it? Have they become so cynical and so bereft of new ideas that they will truncate this session and then have the audacity to ask the people for a second mandate when they couldn't even properly finish off this one?

We oppose this motion, and we will vote nay at 9:20 tonight when the Speaker calls the vote. We oppose it because we oppose in general the budgetary policy of this government, and we are not prepared to give them the benefit of the doubt. In saying this, I believe that I am representing the views of the majority of the people in Waterloo, Wellington and Halton Hills. If this motion passes, the standing committee on finance and economic affairs will be tied up with Bill 187 most likely until May 2.

As a member of this committee, I have to express my disappointment that we have not yet commenced public hearings on the issue of the loss of manufacturing jobs. I have been raising the need for these hearings for almost two years. My private member's resolution was tabled in this House in May 2005, because I was convinced that we faced a crisis in manufacturing and that the government had no plan to avert it. My resolution was finally passed by the House on November 30, just over four months ago. In the finance committee's pre-budget deliberations during the winter, the committee itself endorsed my proposal and included a recommendation for public hearings in our final report to the Minister of Finance. We are now in the fourth week of this sitting, and the finance committee has not yet met since we've returned. It would appear that the government does not want to hold public hearings on the loss of manufacturing jobs, because it would expose their abdication of leadership. It's unfortunate that they care more about their public image than they do about the more than 124,000 workers who have lost their good-paying factory jobs.

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The words “abdication of leadership” best describe the government’s approach to tourism, as well. The Minister of Finance should be embarrassed that his 2007 budget papers document and his fall 2006 economic outlook background papers, when compared together, show a confused and distorted view of the tourism industry. One document says that there were 257,000 people employed in the tourism industry in 2006; the other says that there were 175,500 employed in tourism in that same year. This is a discrepancy of 86,500 jobs. One document says the tourism industry contributed \$6.3 billion to Ontario’s GDP in 2005; the other says that tourism is worth \$11 billion to the GDP that same year. This is a difference of \$4.7 billion. Which one is it? Does anybody know over there? It’s no wonder they’ve had so much trouble balancing their budget.

One thing that is clear is that the Ministry of Tourism’s budget was slashed from \$210 million to \$191 million, year over year, in the fiscal year just ended. This indisputable fact from page 166 of their budget papers document would seem to contradict the McGuinty Liberal government’s repeated claim that they are committed to promoting the tourism industry.

As I have always believed, the potential for tourism in Ontario is infinite. With visionary leadership, there should be no limit to the number of visitors who would want to come to Ontario for their holidays. With our scenic beauty and abundant natural resources, outstanding hospitality, world-class attractions, geographic location, vibrant cities, and quaint and picturesque small towns, Ontario should be leading the world in the growth of tourism visits. Instead, we are lagging behind, and this government must acknowledge its responsibility for this fact.

As I informed the House before Christmas, same-day car trips to Canada from the United States are in steep decline according to Statistics Canada. Last fall, we hit a record low. Unfortunately, the most recent data I’ve seen shows no real improvement; in fact, we are continuing to lose ground. The situation is not helped by the fact that the McGuinty Liberal government has virtually given up on the American tourist market. Instead, there is a marketing campaign which purports to encourage Ontarians to plan their vacations within their home province. In reality, it appears that the marketing campaign was initiated in an attempt to make voters feel good about the province and to try to soften them up to support the McGuinty Liberal government in six months’ time. If that is its real objective, I predict it will fail.

As the PC critic for the Ministry of Tourism, I welcome any new investment in tourism marketing, provided it is well planned, effective, non-partisan and shows the best of the entire province. We should include every region from east to west and north to south, with special emphasis on the communities and regions which are particularly dependent on tourism for their local economic success.

A few months ago, I received a great deal of input from our Ontario tourism partners. I want to thank all of them for their responses and today mention the advice I received from Mr. Gary Clarke of Sam Jakes Inn of Merrickville, in eastern Ontario. He put a lot of effort into consulting with many of his colleagues and wrote a very thoughtful, compelling report which he shared with me. He addressed issues of improving the prosperity and competitiveness of Ontario’s tourism sector. He encouraged new measures to increase investment and decrease the burden on families. He called for tax relief to stimulate growth, and drew attention to the need to invest in our neglected tourism infrastructure. He suggested changes to our labour laws and highlighted the need for upgrading skills training and education.

This is the kind of action we need from our next minister responsible for tourism in a John Tory Progressive Conservative majority government. This is the hope we offer the tourism industry, as together we embrace the promise of the future.

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): Before I begin my remarks on the budget bill tonight—unfortunately, he has left the chamber, but the member from Simcoe North made reference earlier to the World Curling Championships and I just assure him that I and I’m sure most members of our caucus offer our congratulations to the world curling champion Glenn Howard from Coldwater, I think. The member probably would know, if he knows a little bit about curling history, that Thunder Bay was also home to the two-time world curling champion, Al Hackner and his rink, twice in the 1980s, who came within a stone just last week—I ran into him in the airport—of winning the senior championship out in Edmonton; also the world women’s champ, Heather Houston from Thunder Bay—a long history of curling success in Thunder Bay.

While we’re on the sports theme, I should congratulate Katie Weatherston from Thunder Bay, a member of the women’s world hockey championship that just kicked off in the United States last night, 5-1. Congratulations to Katie Weatherston. Congratulations to Jordan Staal, as well, who’s getting ready to get on the ice with the Pittsburgh Penguins; in fact, they’re probably playing now.

Interjection.

Mr. Mauro: He is. He spent a lot of time with the Sudbury Wolves and is a great Thunder Bay person as well. So I offer my congratulations to them.

I’m happy to rise this evening and offer a few comments on the budget. Of course, it’s important for me to first offer my congratulations to the Minister of Finance, Greg Sorbara; to Premier Dalton McGuinty; and in fact, to our entire caucus, who have had a lot of input into the drafting of this document as it’s come forward over the last 12 months. We’ve had a lot of broad-based consultations, a lot of discussion in caucus, and I think this budget is a reflection not only of just a few ministries but clearly of all of the wishes and ambitions of most of the members of our caucus. So I want to congratulate the

minister and the Premier for listening very closely to concerns of all of us.

I think it's also very fair to say that by most people's objective observations, no matter whom you talk to—business, those who advocate on behalf of the disadvantaged in our province, the middle class—most people are generally very supportive and think that this particular budget was indeed a Liberal budget, perhaps the first one that could be so described that's come forward in this province in quite some time. It speaks to Liberal values, so in that context alone, I think we're all very proud of it. We spoke to the minimum wage in a very clear way and in fact enhanced what we had done in our 2003 campaign by following through to an increase in that from \$8 to \$10.25.

The Ontario child benefit—and I would like to take a moment to congratulate my seatmate Deb Matthews for all the great work that she did on that. Increases to the ODSP, increases to OW and legal aid—I've received calls from the law society in Thunder Bay, the local chapter, congratulating us on the work that we did and the money that we put into that particular area as well. So lots of people, representing a lot of different, diverse groups in Ontario, on a broad-based, non-partisan nature, have phoned me and offered their support for what they see as a very positive and terrific budget for all of the people of Ontario, not just a few individual sectors.

I would like to talk just a little bit about a few of the things that are particularly interesting and intriguing for me that are in this budget, that help my community of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. What we had in here were three more great projects of an infrastructure announcement. We know that coming in in October 2003 when we were first elected, there were several deficits facing us besides the fiscal deficit. One of them was an infrastructure deficit. We had three more great announcements in the budget this time for my riding of Atikokan, including the smaller townships and including the small community of Atikokan, as well as the city of Thunder Bay, building on previous infrastructure announcements that were made in the 2006 budget. We'll all remember that Move Ontario was a large part of that budget. Significant infrastructure dollars were brought forward at that time for the city of Thunder Bay: \$6.9 million. In this last budget, for me, is about \$2.5 million more, as well as the COMRIF money. So I think it's clear that we've been going a long way to addressing the infrastructure deficit we inherited when we came to government.

I spoke in my opening remarks about how this has been well received through a broad base of different sectors in the province, not just individual groups. In Thunder Bay alone, our action on the business education tax over the course of the next seven years is going to leave \$14 million more in the hands of individual businesses. I have had multiple calls from business owners in the city thanking me for that little component that's in the budget. It's significant. We all know that those tax rates have been high for quite some time. This is a big move, and they're thrilled with it. Of course,

we've still enhanced and continue to make our commitments to Thunder Bay Transit—\$4.5 million in gas tax revenue has flowed to the city of Thunder Bay.

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Also mentioned in there was another great project that hopefully people are going to see announced in the not-too-distant future. As we in our government continue to move forward with diversification of the economy in northern and northwestern Ontario, we have continued to invest significantly in knowledge-based products. Some will know, if they read the budget, that there is mention in there of a particular project called the Molecular Medicine Research Centre. We, with our government and through the help of Minister Bartolucci and the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., have already contributed significantly to this project, to the tune of \$2.2 million, and we are hopeful that in the not-too-distant future we are going to see an additional amount of money, to the tune of about \$12 million or \$14 million, committed to this project. It's in the review stage; we feel like we're getting there. We've been working with the proponents of this project for, I would say, well over two years—I think we've exceeded two years now; there's been lots of to and fro. But that is an example of the work we've been doing, I would say, that has not been occurring in this province for a long, long time. We are working very hard to diversify the economy up there.

Other projects that fall into that same category that we have funded, many through NOHFC and others through different ministries: Molecular World, Genesis Genomics, a lot of research money for Lakehead University, more graduate students and on and on. So significant moves, significant dollars to try to help diversify the economy of northern Ontario and, in my case, northwestern Ontario. I'm very proud of those moves, and I think they're going to begin to bear fruit in the very near future.

I can remember very clearly, before I arrived at this place, the six years that I served as a municipal councillor in the city of Thunder Bay, the years 1997 to 2003. During that time, of course, the provincial government was the Conservative government under the leadership of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. I think that my particular experience was not unlike the experience of many others who are here now. In the election of 2003, I think there were 36 or 38 first-time MPPs elected to this Legislature. Many of those 36 or 38 first-timers came from a municipal background, and I was one of them.

When I was asked to run in Thunder Bay–Atikokan, one of the particular reasons that I seriously considered it was my experience as a municipal councillor. During the term of that Harris-Eves government, I can tell you that every time you as a municipal councillor looked up, you were afraid that something else was going to be coming down the pike to hit you right between the eyes. That was the experience we had in Thunder Bay, and that was the experience that I know a lot of other municipal councillors had. I think that's what prompted a lot of people who were municipal councillors during that period to

decide that they felt they needed to run for provincial office.

During that time, if we remember what went on in the context of the budget and what was going on from 1995 to 2003, we had a provincial economy that was doing pretty well. It was riding on the back of a red-hot American economy and was doing very well. The provincial treasury was flush. At the same time, we were selling assets. The provincial government sold the 407—everybody remembers that one—for about \$3 billion, I think the number was. Apparently, it's something that's valued as high as \$8 billion.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): It's \$14 billion.

Mr. Mauro: It's \$14 billion.

We all know a little bit about the lease agreement that's in place, which we tried to get changed but unfortunately were unable to, so we're stuck with that for about 100 years, I believe. So an asset worth \$8 billion goes for \$3 billion, we're selling assets, the provincial treasury is doing very well, we're downloading billions of dollars in costs on to the backs of municipal residential property taxpayers, and what do we still find when we come to government in October 2003? A fiscal deficit of \$5.6 billion—almost impossible to fathom under those circumstances. The two pieces don't reconcile, they don't seem to fit, and yet that's what we found, a \$5.6-billion deficit. And during the same period of time, that government was able to add \$22 billion or \$26 billion to the total debt of the province.

The myth of good fiscal management by the Conservatives was shattered during that period of time. Why were they doing all this? Well, they were doing it because it was necessary to fund their tax cuts. They were doing it by slashing ODSP and OW rates, they were doing it by cutting the public service, they were doing it by firing nurses, and all sorts of other things that went on like that.

This is not in any way an overstatement in terms of what was going on in municipalities during that time. I can tell you that shortly after the election I had an opportunity to visit several communities in northern Ontario on behalf of the minister as we revamped the programming under the northern Ontario heritage fund, and I had the opportunity to visit Timmins. The mayor of the day there, Mayor Vic Power, asked me how my drive in from the airport was. I made the comment that it was very bumpy, and he said, "Well, Bill, do you know why that is? That section of road has just been handed to us by the Progressive Conservative government." As I recall, I looked at him with some disbelief. I said, "Vic, I think that's a 30-kilometre ride." He said, "Yes, you're in the neighbourhood." That's an example of what they were doing during that term and still leaving budget deficits on the order of \$5.6 billion. So it's a little bit rich and difficult for me to sit on this side of the House and listen to them try to lecture anybody in this province, let alone members on this side of the House, on how we should best bring in a budget. There's much more that I could

say, but I'll yield the floor to others so they have an opportunity.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: Sad news that we've lost two more members of our armed services and three others injured. Perhaps we could have a moment's silence out of respect.

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration would like a moment's silence. Agreed? All stand, please.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I just want to offer a message of condolence, having just stood for a moment to recognize the loss, and also recognize the fact that democracy comes at a very high price.

I want to take the next few minutes to speak about the motion we are debating here this evening, which is a time allocation motion. I found it sort of interesting that the government House leader would file this motion, because this is the centrepiece of any government's legislative framework. It is passing strange that you are asking for time allocation to, in fact, limit debate on what is the most important piece of legislation that any government has.

I also thought it was really interesting that the decision of the House leader would be based on the wishes of the Premier. Last week in debate, the Premier made a comment about how he felt that members of the opposition weren't really appreciative of the importance of the budget. He said here that he thought we were missing this opportunity to debate the budget—I refer, of course, to the scandal we have unearthed. So I find it really interesting to juxtapose, on one hand, the Premier's interest in further debate on the budget, I would argue, by his comments in question period, and at the same time, this evening he has made sure that debate on the budget comes to a quick end. I just thought it was important to demonstrate this fundamental contradiction in the position taken as recently as last week by the Premier.

I think the opportunity, in terms of the motion we are debating here, is to just highlight a couple of the most important parts of this budget. One of the things that I think the general public has yet to appreciate the full implication of is the question of the changes in assessment. The government, after having frozen this process, which you just have to see as a way of having a time out without actually having any kind of solution or practical suggestions—so after having the time out in the budget, they have identified it as a four-year assessment period instead of a three-year assessment period. People need to understand that this actually does absolutely nothing in terms of what the assessed value is. It rolls it over a four-year period instead of three.

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Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins—James Bay): Speaker, I can't hear her.

The Deputy Speaker: Just one moment. Is there something wrong with the audio? Apparently there's—

Mr. Bisson: No, too many voices.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, well, now that you've mentioned it, perhaps we could keep the chatter down to a lower level. Sorry, the member for York North.

Mrs. Munro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to draw the public's attention to the fact that having an assessment period of time roll from three to four years is not something that is going to make a significant difference to one's assessed value. Instead, we as a party, as the opposition, have suggested and recommended that people should have a 5% cap, which would then allow those kinds of changes to float back and forth but within a manageable range.

The comment by the Premier when he thought we should be debating the budget—that was last week, not this week—made reference to the fact that it was over \$90 billion in expenditures. While obviously he considers that to be very much a plus, I think many taxpayers would look at that as over a \$20-billion increase in spending since the government came to power. When you consider that this is in fact our money that is being spent, one has to step back and say, "Well, are we getting our money's worth?" It works out to about \$4,500 per household.

Part of that \$90 billion, of course, dealt with many different programs, but one of the things I think one has to be aware of is that some of that spending is spread out over not just months, not just this fiscal budget year, but several years; in fact, not only the next election, but the one after that as well. So it certainly puts in context the hurrah that the government might express over the budget, recognizing that in fact it actually spreads over a period of time.

I want to talk for a moment about the importance of the budget as a method of leveraging the prosperity of the province because, really, government should be in the business of providing a regulatory framework and some guidance but not be in business. So when we look at the fact that the province of Ontario is dead last in the area of economic development in this country, it looks to me as if this budget in fact doesn't provide the kind of economic leverage that we need. We need a budget that speaks in a better fashion to ensuring ongoing prosperity.

One of the limitations that I think this government has created, quite frankly, in that regard is its energy policy. Voters will remember that the government promised that it would close the coal-fired furnaces in the province by 2007. This was despite the fact that common expert wisdom was that it would take several years to do that. Obviously, you need to do it in such a way that there's a transition that doesn't disrupt the power flow for the province, that allows for the development of expertise and allows for the reconstruction of generating plants and so on and so forth.

That was all ignored. This was all going to be accomplished by 2007. It wasn't until late last year that the energy minister indicated, of course, that 2007 was now a goal that had slipped away, without any kind of indication as to when, in fact, that would take place.

I think two items are really important. One item, of course, is that as the previous government, we had made a commitment that the Lakeview station would be closed, and that, of course, is the only one that has been done.

So, despite the expertise, there is no date that this government is prepared to give—but I think it's an extremely vital one, because, historically, having a competitive source of power in this province has provided many, many jobs and has provided opportunities for investment to come to this province and provide those jobs.

This is just one element where this government has failed to provide those kinds of carrots, those kinds of things that give security and stability to the economy.

If you consider that the budget is the most important indicator that any government can give in terms of direction and goals, then I'm afraid we have to say that this has been very disappointing for the community at large and for the economy specifically.

Mr. Bisson: I could say that I'm looking forward to this opportunity to speak on this time allocation motion, but, quite frankly, I'm in a bit of a quandary when it comes to this debate for a couple of reasons.

One, I'm going to have an opportunity to talk about the new diamond tax that's being introduced by way of this budget and what it means to the mining industry in general in Ontario.

Also, I've been listening attentively to question period for the last couple of weeks and listening to the Premier condemning members of the opposition for not wanting to talk about the budget and instead wanting to talk about the lottery scandal. Here we've got a chance to debate the budget, and what does the government do? They time-allocate the budget debate. I just think it's kind of ironic that we're in a situation where the Premier says he wants us to talk about the good measures in the budget—and I agree, there are some measures in this budget that I can support. There are some things in it that I think were positive. There are other things in it that I think were not so positive, and I'll get a bit of a chance to speak to that. But it's a time-allocated debate, so I won't get a chance, as any other member in this House will not get the chance, to really talk in detail about the budget and to talk about how we can make it better. That's really what behooves us all here, as members. The whole point of this Legislature is that when a government proposes a budget, we have a debate, and in the debate we put forward ideas about what the government has done well and what they've not done as well and how we can make it better for the citizens we represent. Unfortunately, in this debate, that's not going to mean a heck of a lot, because it's a time-allocated debate and the government has decided to truncate our discussion.

Let me talk about a couple of things.

First of all, I want to say something positive, because I think it's the responsible thing to do. You shouldn't come into this House, as a government member, and only applaud the agenda of the government like a trained seal;

neither should an opposition member come in here and just criticize.

There are some things in this budget that I think were okay; for example, the minimum wage move. I think the government heeded well the advice that they got from New Democrats and from the voting public, the Toronto Star and others who were involved, and moved on the minimum wage. Did they do it as fast as I would have liked? No. Nonetheless, they're moving. So I think the general principle, as far as the increase of the minimum wage, is—excuse me. I've got a cold. When I talk about Liberals, I don't normally get choked up like this. My God, it's a cold I just can't get rid of.

I want to say that as a general principle we support a \$10 minimum wage. That's what New Democrats have been pushing for. Did we get it in this budget? Quite frankly, not as fast as we want, but it's headed in the right direction. I would have much preferred to see it happen a lot more quickly.

The problem we're going to have, as you well know, is that by the time the minimum wage is actually increased to \$10 an hour, we'll be three years behind, and then we'll have to have it at \$11 to stay at the rate that we have to be at. So I think, generally, that was not a bad one.

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There are a few other initiatives in the budget that I think, again, on their own, are not bad ones.

But here is the point: In a budget—here is part of the problem with the rules of this House—there are things that some of the members of the government sure would like to not support and would like to see hived off so they can have a separate vote, as the members of the opposition would like to be able to vote for some things and hive them off. Unfortunately, it's a one-size-fits-all kind of vote. The government members, obviously, have to vote with their government, so they're going to vote in favour. We, in the opposition, will vote opposed because there are some legitimate beefs in regard to this budget.

I want to get into the most serious one, in my view, that affects my constituency. I, like you, Mr. Speaker, am elected from a constituency. We're here to represent our constituents. I have, in my constituency, the first diamond mine to go into operation in the province of Ontario. De Beers Canada has spent a tremendous amount of money over the last number of years—25 years—along with other junior mining companies, doing exploration on the James Bay, looking for diamonds, because there was an indication some 20 years ago that there were diamonds in the sediment found in the Attawapiskat River. As a result of that sediment study of some 20 years ago, a number of mining companies, including De Beers in the end, did a lot of work to try to quantify if there are enough diamonds in that area to actually bring a mine into production. De Beers went through a very painstaking process of doing the economics on this project after they had decided there was probably enough there to make something happen. They spent literally tens of millions of dollars to quantify this

particular ore body. They did a really aggressive diamond drill program. They dug boreholes. More sediment work was done. Based on what they found, they determined there was X amount of diamonds. Now, here's the trick in mining—and this is what most people don't understand—you've got to spend truckloads of money to find a mine and bring it into operation. A diamond mine, a gold mine or a copper mine doesn't just happen and fall out of the sky, out of nowhere. Those kinds of investments that bring those projects into production are as a result of spending literally tens and hundreds of millions of dollars on the exploration stage of the project. De Beers ended at a point, not that long ago, about three years ago, where they had decided that the ore body was big enough. They did the economics on the project, and based on the economics of that day, they recommended to the international board of De Beers that they invest the money to go ahead and put this project into production.

That one project cost over a billion dollars to develop and put online. That's just what they're spending to build this mine. You've got to keep in mind where this project is. The De Beers Victor Project is in northern Ontario on the Attawapiskat River, 80 miles west of Attawapiskat. For those people who have not travelled that part of the province, there are no roads. The closest road to the De Beers project is about 400 kilometres south on Highway 11. We're talking about what the Crees called mushkegowuk, which is swamp. That entire area is basically one big swamp that is really expensive to try to build roads to.

De Beers, as a result of putting this mine into production, has to put in an entire infrastructure to make that mine operate: winter roads, hydroelectric, telecommunications, bringing materials up etc.—over a billion dollars. Before they spent that billion dollars, they had a discussion with the province of Ontario. They said, "What is your tax regime? What are we going to have to expect to pay in taxes when it comes to royalties on this project?"

Ontario, I might say, had the most attractive taxes when it came to royalties for investments here in Ontario. Ontario was leading the pack. We were on the cutting edge. Ontario was one of the best jurisdictions in Canada in which to invest in mining. Let me tell you, investment in mining is not just happening in Ontario. We're competing internationally for money to bring a project like that online. In Ontario, our mining regime says that if you're operating a mine south of Highway 11, south of 50, as we say, you will pay 10% of the value of whatever you take out of the ground to the crown based on an evaluation of what you have there. So if I start a gold mine, a diamond mine, a copper mine and it's south of 50, I pay to the province of Ontario 10% of the value of what I've taken out of the ground, based on a formula. The same way the oil industry pays royalties to the province of Alberta, Ontario collects royalties on the minerals in the ground. If you're doing a project north of 50, where there are no roads, Ontario, to its benefit—and it might have been done under the Liberals, it might have been under the Conservatives—reduced the royalty from

10% to 5%. We moved the royalty from 10% to 5% in order to say that if you're trying to start a mine in an area where there are no roads, no hydro, no infrastructure, we will recognize that you're going to have to build the infrastructure, not have the state, the province, build it for you. If I start a mine in Timmins, there's hydro there, there's natural gas there, there are roads, there are airports—everything to make my mine operate, as far as infrastructure, is there. But if I do it in Fort Albany or in Big Trout Lake or in Attawapiskat or Peawanuck or Martin Falls, that infrastructure doesn't exist, and the company itself will have to pay to put it in.

So the government of Ontario said—rightfully so—“We will charge a 5% royalty on what comes out of the ground north of 50 for all mining.” That created a boom of activity. It was that 5% royalty and a number of other things that we did as far as incentives in Ontario that got companies like De Beers to do the exploration that led to the finding of this mine and eventually to the decision to open that mine.

Well, imagine the surprise when I sat in the Legislature the day that the budget was presented and executives and workers who are involved with De Beers—Chief Mike Carpenter, the chief of Attawapiskat; Chief Stan Louttit, the grand chief of Mushkegowuk council—find out that we've now changed the game: We've gone from a 5% royalty north of 50 on diamonds to 13%, more than doubling the rate of taxes paid on royalty.

Now, the government, I have to believe, did this for a couple of reasons. One, well, do you know what? The Northwest Territories are doing it. That's what the Minister of Finance said: “We're just doing what NWT does.” They've got the worst tax regime in the country, Minister of Finance. Don't you get it? Nobody wants to invest there because the tax regime is too expensive for them to do it. They were investing in Ontario because our tax regime was favourable to mining. I say that as a New Democrat; I believe everybody should pay their fair share of taxes. But I understand, coming from northern Ontario, that if you don't have a tax regime that's competitive with other jurisdictions when it comes to exploration, you will never attract the kind of investment you need to get a project going.

Imagine the surprise of many people—Mayor Tom Laughren, the chamber of commerce, the labour councils, the First Nations and others—who saw this and all of a sudden said, “The whole economics on this thing has been thrown out the door.” So we've gone from being the most attractive tax regime in Canada to the worst, overnight, by way of this budget. For that reason alone, I cannot support this budget.

Now, I'm hoping that there's going to be some movement on the part of the government. De Beers was here last week. You might have been at the reception of Meet the Miners. For the first time since I've been here in 17 years, there were some pretty stern words from the leaders at De Beers telling the government, in the words of one of the executives the other day, “Look in the back of the room. There's the display for the first diamond

mine in Ontario, and probably the last one, because nobody is going to make the kinds of investments that are necessary, at 13%, that have been made to make this mine go.”

What makes this really unfair is this: If you were in the gold mining business and you started a gold mine right next door to the De Beers operation, the Victor project in Attawapiskat, you would pay 5% royalty. But because you're operating a diamond mine, you're going to pay 13%. People are going to say, “Oh, diamonds are more valuable.” That's what the argument is going to be. The reality is that the costs are the same: The same cost for electricity, the same cost to haul stuff up, the same cost for transportation, for telecommunication, for all of the infrastructure to run that mine. Why shouldn't you treat gold mining the same as diamond mining? That has always been the basic way we've operated mining in Canada: We've said, “We'll have a tax regime, we'll have environmental laws and we'll have various regulations that apply to the sector of the industry.” Imagine if you had a tax that said that GM in Oshawa is taxed at one rate and Ford in Oakville is treated differently, and one pays more than the other. We would never stand for a tax that basically said, “If you're Ford, you pay one rate; if you're GM, you pay the other; and if it's Chrysler or Honda, it's different.” We understand that you have to have sectoral approaches to taxation. What we've done in this tax bill, in the budget, is to basically say that we have one system for one type of mining and we have another system of taxation for another.

Now, I'm hoping that things will turn around. I know that the De Beers people have met, I think it was yesterday, with the Minister of Finance. I talked to the Minister of Finance last week and pointed out the error of his ways, why I thought it was wrong. He told me that he would meet with them; the meeting was set up. I do know that they met. I'm hoping that the minister has finally realized what this all means and things will turn around. I'm hoping that the committee hearings we're going to get—which won't be many; a day or a day and a half at the most, which I think is a travesty. I think a budget should have a little bit more time than that in committee. At the very least, we should have the committee travel to where communities are affected by this budget. Nonetheless, I'm hoping De Beers and others will present before the committee and explain why this was wrong. I'm hoping the government can do what is sometimes necessary, and that is to say, “I was wrong,” and to change. That is one of the reasons people become disconnected from politics, politicians and political parties. Even when sometimes we know we were wrong, we're not prepared to admit so.

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I say it would be nice to see that. I've done it in my own time in politics. I can tell you stories where I've gone to people and said, “Listen, on that one, I was wrong. Maybe I should have done things differently.” That's how you learn and you grow, and I hope the government does the same.

I also want to talk a little bit, just finishing up, with regard to the De Beers issue, the diamond tax. What I hope and what I think everybody else hopes is that we have a regime that in the end will treat everyone the same.

The other thing I want to talk about in this budget debate is something that has really driven me—that I really don't like—and that is the way we approach infrastructure spending in the province. We have a system program called COMRIF. It's a municipal infrastructure program that's partly funded by the province and sometimes by the federal government, and we have this huge bureaucratic process which communities have to go through to apply for this money.

If you're the community of Kapuskasing, Hearst, Val Rita, Timmins or wherever you might be and you want to approach the province to get funding for infrastructure to do a project, the province says in COMRIF, "Municipal council, make up your mind—what one project do you want to have funded? Make up your priority, tell us what it is and it's in the mix with everybody else."

The town of Kapuskasing or whichever may have more than one project that needs to be done. They may need to fix the street at the same time they need to fix a water tower in another part of the community. There may be an arena that needs some repairs—there are all kinds of infrastructure issues that have to be dealt with, or there needs to be some expansion if that is the case. What this program has always done, in my view, is very much limit the ability of municipalities to plan properly for the reinvestment and building up of their municipal infrastructure.

I would propose that we have a different program. We should have a different approach. We should do what we have done from time to time, and that is to say, "Let's figure out how much the province can afford to give in municipal infrastructure, and then let's have a formula that apportions money to each municipality based on the number of people who live in the community, the size of their assessment base—some sort of a formula that gives each community a fair shot at X amount of dollars per year, so that if you're the town of Sudbury and you say your formula will give you \$15 million a year, the municipal council in Sudbury for the next number of years knows they'll get X amount of dollars every year for infrastructure, and they're able to do some planning.

For example, in the case of Kapuskasing, they got \$5 million just recently for a water project that was given by the province—I think it was a good thing—but if the town of Kapuskasing knew that every year it gets \$3.5 million on a formula and that would be guaranteed for four or five years, at least for the term of a council, I would argue, they then can sit back and say, "Okay, we've got some choices to make. We've got to partially fund it ourselves, we've got to make sure we can raise the money either by debenture or by the tax base to be able to pay for it," and then say, "What are our priorities for the next four years? We've got to fix Ontario Street. We've got to fix the water line in this part of the com-

munity. The arena needs a new roof, new chillers," or whatever it might be, the municipal complex—you know, whatever the decisions are. But then you leave the municipality to make up the decisions as to what project is going to get funded over a four-year period.

The reason we don't do that, in my view—I'm quite cynical—is that it takes away the ability of the province to do a whole bunch of press conferences. There's nothing more that ministers love to do. I look at my good friends across the way, because I've been there as well, and you want to keep control on when those goodies are going to come down and when you can make the announcement. I just think, "Yeah, I got some." I well know. I understand how that works. But I'm saying we can still do that, because you could put a requirement to the municipalities that whenever you're announcing your decisions on infrastructure spending, you have to do a joint announcement with the province, either with the local member or the cabinet minister—whatever way. The government can decide that. And then basically you can still get the best bang for your buck.

The other thing is that we have to insist—I would say insist and demand—that the federal government be part of this as well. They're the biggest culprits on this. They're the welfare bums of Canada, as far as I'm concerned. The federal government has downloaded—you know, they've got huge surpluses, right? And what's the surplus this year? Your husband, the Minister of Finance—it was huge.

It started with Paul Martin. Paul Martin said, "I want to balance the books of Canada," and said, "Stick it to the provinces." The provinces said, "We want to balance our books, so we stuck it to the municipalities." As a result, the federal government has these big surpluses, and the province and municipalities are strapped for cash. I think the federal government has to come in on it.

I would say a good way to do that would be on a one-third basis each. The municipalities, along with the province and the federal government, each put up a third, build up the fund based on the formula that I talked about, and then municipalities can go out and make some decisions.

You could, if you wanted to, as federal and provincial governments, establish some priorities to say, "You can't use all of your money just to buy buses. You've got to also use your money to do water, to do arenas." You can have a different kind of mix on it. But the point is, at least municipalities would be able to plan. I have never liked this form of municipal infrastructure spending.

We've been fortunate in my riding, I've got to say. Hearst just got close to \$1 million about two weeks ago; Kapuskasing got \$5 million; Smooth Rock Falls got \$800,000; the town of Fauquier got a fair chunk; the city of Timmins and others. We've been fairly fortunate, and I think that's a result of good municipal councils. I'll say it in this House. It's not the provincial member or the cabinet minister who made those applications happen on their own. We've got good municipal councils that put together some very strong proposals, brought them

before the provincial government and lobbied hard to get their money. I tip my hat to the municipal aldermen and the mayors who were involved. I know Mayor Spacek and Mayor Sigouin and others worked really hard to make sure that they identified some good priorities for their communities that eventually got funded.

But I'll tell you, it's one heck of a process that people have to go through, and I would say that the very least we should do is have an infrastructure program that is a little bit more predictable when it comes to the communities.

The last thing I want to end on is the whole issue of the provincial clawback. One of the things in this budget and one of the other reasons I'm not going to vote for this budget is that we have been calling on the government for years now—first the Conservatives, then with the Liberal Party—to end the clawback. Every time a parent receives the family child tax credit on behalf of a child, that should not be deducted from their provincial sources of income. The Liberals in opposition were apoplectic against the Mike Harris-Eves government, demanding that be undone. They've been in office for three and a half years now. Nothing has been done in order to resolve this problem.

In this budget, we finally got a positive announcement, right? We're going to end the clawback. But it won't be done in time for the end of this Parliament and it won't be done in time for the next Parliament; it will be done for the Parliament after that. So the decision that Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Sorbara have made in their budget is to off the issue not to this Parliament, not to the next Parliament but the Parliament after that. So we would all have to be re-elected twice, in this provincial election and then the one following four years later, if there's a majority government, to see the clawback end. I think that's cynical politics. I don't believe governments should be making those kinds of moves, making announcements that are basically going to affect somebody in the very far future. I think if the government's plan is to end the clawback, you should say you're ending 20% or 25% or 50% this year, you're ending the rest of it next year, and that you have some concrete steps to do that. That's not what this government is doing. The government is offing the clawback deduction away two Parliaments from now, and I think that's wrong.

With that, I want to thank members for taking the time to listen to my contribution. I know the Minister of Finance will be running back to the Ministry of Finance tonight to amend his budget according to what I had to say tonight. For that, Mr. Sorbara, I want to thank you.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak this evening in support of a very good budget. I'm very proud of the budget that we've had. Just because of the way that the member for Timmins-James Bay ended up talking about infrastructure programs, perhaps I will start where he left off because we too have had some frustration with the COMRIF program, which is three-way sharing. For precisely that reason, we introduced the rural infrastructure program, which was \$70 million initially, but in this

budget was doubled to \$140 million. That is provincial money. It's simpler to apply for than the process that my colleague across the floor just described with the COMRIF program. I'm delighted that my rural municipalities were able to benefit from that. The Elora area of Centre Wellington, which I actually share with the member for Waterloo-Wellington, received \$900,000 for a biosolids waste management facility, and one of my other rural municipalities, Puslinch, received over a quarter of a million dollars for help in rebuilding one of its roads that needs some attention. So I did just want to point out that because of the concerns that were outlined by the member, which we share, we did introduce our own rural infrastructure program here in Ontario, and this budget is making even more money available to that.

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But the centrepiece of our budget, I'm very proud to say, has been in the area of child poverty. As a member of the Liberal women's caucus, I was absolutely thrilled to see this initiative, because the women's caucus had identified child poverty as an area that we wanted to work on. Certainly it's very gratifying to see the reception that the work, led by my colleague Deb Matthews, and by Kathleen Wynne before she became a minister, and which we took to caucus, to the Premier and to the Minister of Finance, had, and that it has materialized in what is the beginning of a really dramatic overhaul of the way we look at child poverty in this province.

One of the observations the women's caucus made was that for a child living in poverty, it really doesn't matter whether the parents are on social assistance or whether they're members of the working poor. From the child's point of view, they are living in poverty, and we need to look at the problem from that point of view. That's exactly what we are doing in this budget. We are saying that where there is a child living in a poor family, we will support that poor child regardless of the economic circumstances of the family, or at least the circumstances that lead that family to be living in poverty. We're going to look at the child and not at the income source of the parents.

For every child living in poverty, we have introduced the Ontario child benefit. Starting this year, that will be \$250 per child. When is it fully rolled in in 2011, it will be \$2.1 billion that the child benefit will send to poor children in this province. That is why it's taking a number of years to roll in. It's such a dramatic change in the way Ontario supports poor children. One of the things we also know about the way current programs work is that very often if you're on social assistance, if you're a family with kids, living in poverty, there are programs which support children where, if their parent goes out to work, the support ends. What that really does is say to that family, "You know, your children really would be better off if you stayed on welfare." We said, "You know, that's wrong. If a child is living in poverty, the benefit should continue, and as the parent moves from social assistance back into the workforce, that shouldn't mean their children lose the support of the province." So

we are dramatically restructuring our support and making sure that every child who is living in poverty receives the benefit based on the fact that they are in poverty, not based on the fact that their family is on social assistance. The working poor will be treated equally, and that is brand new in the province of Ontario and something of which I am very proud.

There are a number of other things which affect children, and as somebody who has spent a lifetime involved in education, I think we need to look at programs in terms of the whole child, not just the education system.

Excuse me; I think Mr. Bisson and I are sharing the same MPP cough and cold here.

One of the things we did was to extend funding for daycare. What we have wanted to do and have begun to do is to extend the provision of daycare in the province of Ontario. I'm very pleased to say that this year we are increasing the annual funding by \$25 million. Next year that will go up to \$50 million, which will again allow us to expand daycare services for children all over the province.

Another issue is children who are at risk. We know that a number of children in this province have mental health challenges, and one of the things that needs some attention in this province is our children's mental health system. It has been frozen, through the inaction of previous governments, for a number of years. So I was absolutely delighted to see that we have added \$8 million to the annual funding of children's mental health services in the province. That will have a significant impact on the number of children we can help.

We're also adding money to children's treatment services for children who have some sort of disability. We're adding an extra \$4 million to support them.

So there's quite a package here when you look at all the different services that we are beefing up.

I'd also like to talk a bit about some of the other things. I started with the rural section of my riding, but I'd also like to talk about some things that will be of particular benefit to Guelph. Guelph business people will qualify for a reduction in business education taxes. That will result in a savings of \$8.5 million to the Guelph business community. That's equivalent to a 39% cut in the business education tax rate as it's rolled in for industrial corporations and a 17% cut in the commercial tax rate.

There's \$2.7 million for transit in Guelph, and over \$700,000 for affordable housing in Guelph.

Indeed, there's a lot of good news in this budget for the citizens of Ontario and I'm very proud to support it.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I want to start by saying that I'm appalled by the fact that this government, this House leader specifically and this Premier, after all of their presentations, pre-election and during the election, about transparency and accountability and the aversion to a government's mandate and its use of its executive powers, we have before us what I would call an omnibus time allocation motion. This is on a budget that,

quite honestly, is staggering in its spending and completely neglectful in its priorities.

This is the budget that we're actually being forced to debate. It's just incredible. It's close to 300 pages, and for those viewing, the secret is in the detail.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Have you read it?

Mr. O'Toole: In fact, it's a promissory note.

The minister in charge of lotteries is here tonight. He, above all, should be silenced. He is a know-nothing, say-nothing and do-nothing minister. There have been no answers to the questions raised to him—120 questions, zero answers—and to the Premier as well.

Quite frankly, if you look at this time allocation motion—I'm speaking directly to my constituents in the riding of Durham and, more importantly, to the people of Ontario—don't be fooled. Why are they time-allocating a budget bill? They are limiting the opposition's opportunity to point out to you and to my constituents and to all the people of Ontario what's not being done.

If you looked at just the one issue of children who are being treated in the community, vulnerable children in the care of the province of Ontario directly through partner funding, they've committed \$200 million to that program. We met with those providers in our community and they have told us that unless the \$200 million flows this year—it's a four-year commitment—there will be work disruptions and vulnerable children will be exposed. That's just one area.

But the general theme that I hear in Durham region, which myself and Christine Elliott and Jerry Ouellette try to represent respectfully and responsibly, is that it's time for Durham's fair share.

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What's in this budget? Let's look just at that for a moment. First of all, in all of our minds and all of our hearts and those of our families, there's Bill 140, which is the long-term-care bill, where they're eliminating some 23,000 beds in this province. So for your parents, and the bed blockers, as they call them, chronic patients in hospitals who should be transferred to long-term care, there's going to be no place, no room in the inn. The commitment by this government in Bill 140 eliminates—B and C homes are now exposed to having less security in offering these services in the community.

But even continuing on the health debate, discussion, we had a bill before this House which is now starting to be phased in. It's Bill 102, which is trying to regulate the pharmaceutical act and the Ontario Drug Benefit Act. In fact, we're seeing now that there's going to be some excruciating pressure on your local pharmacy and on the pharmacists themselves. They're going to be surprised, because they're reducing the funding and reducing the number of prescription medications that you're going to be entitled to.

I can boil it down specifically to my riding of Durham. There are two hospitals that are now hanging by their thumbs: The hospital in Port Perry, the hospital in Bowmanville, and I should say, on behalf of Christine Elliott, the hospital in Whitby, are all being threatened with an

imminent reduction of services, directed by the minister. We know that they had an operating problem. I think the operating budget was around \$14 million. These are services. They were directed by the Minister of Health, George Smitherman, the Premier and the members around the cabinet table. They gave them \$7 million, which is half of it, they gave them \$1 million in one-time funding and told them, directed them, to cut \$7 million. Let's look down deeper into this issue, just this one issue, in the limited time, because of time allocation, that I've been allowed to speak, not just on behalf of my constituents; more importantly, beware of false promises. As the member from the NDP said, the emperor has no clothes.

The most important program: The member from Guelph-Wellington spoke about children's mental health services. The Minister of Health, George Smitherman, has said—I'm putting it on the record here today; it's in the budget; it's in communications that I've had in public meetings—to cut \$3 million from children's mental health issues. Your family—children suffering various issues in their life are being told, "The service is not going to be there for you." Thank Dalton. At the same time, recognize that they have increased the health tax. Each family that is working and commuting on the GO train with me is paying about \$1,600 for the health tax. You're paying more and you're getting less. The member from Guelph-Wellington spoke. I listened specifically to her comments. Why? Because, on the very next day after they had cut \$3 million from Durham, they announced in a Liberal riding, Guelph—and this is tokenistic partisanship—an addition of \$3 million. Perhaps it's because her riding is vulnerable. She could lose the next election.

Interjections.

Mr. O'Toole: The minister announced it; not me. I'm revealing it to the people of Ontario from the maroon book. Be aware of the maroon book. Be aware of anything in one of the books. In fact, the regional chair said in the last budget and in this budget—not just for the 407 and Durham region transit; they gave hundreds of millions of dollars to Peel, York and the city of Toronto. What did we get? We got \$55 million, compared to the hundreds of millions. In fact, we have the highest growth and potentially the highest risk.

The viewers should be aware that the job losses in Ontario, and more specifically in the auto sector—they were addressed earlier today on the budget—more importantly there in this province, by this government's tax policy, are devastating to the economy and to the lives of the constituents I represent. I challenge this government on a time allocation motion to let us have our voice.

The Deputy Speaker: The chair recognizes the member for York-South.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): It is York West, but that's okay, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The chair recognizes the member for York West.

Mr. Sergio: It's 9 o'clock, so I can understand. I only have a couple—

Interjections.

Mr. Sergio: Yes, indeed, I want to get to the York subway as well.

I thank you for the few minutes that I have. I want to make a couple of points, because I think it is impossible to do justice to one of the best budgets I've ever seen since I've been in this House. I think we should really consider passing this budget as soon as possible and bring all the good, positive aspects to the people of Ontario.

Some things never change between opposition and government. I look—three and a half years—and what a change, what a difference. Thank goodness that every three or four years the people of Ontario have an opportunity. And you know what? Politicians are like babies; they need to be changed sometimes. Thank goodness. Otherwise, we wouldn't be here today, bringing this particular good news.

Let me address perhaps the most important aspect of the budget with respect to Toronto, if you will, the people of York West and York North, and the people of Ontario as a whole, because the impact of \$670 million allocated for the extension of the subway will not only help Toronto, York region, Durham and Peel, but all the people of Ontario.

Today, I was completely shocked by the shocking admission of the leader of the third party here, saying that if he had a chance, he would do away with the extension of the Spadina subway to York. It is quite—

Mr. Dunlop: He didn't say that.

Mr. Sergio: I'll read exactly what he said, if you would be willing to listen and be quiet, because when you spoke I did not speak.

What the other side fails to understand is that York University is a city in itself. There are some 51,000 students on a daily basis, plus another 5,000 or 6,000 staff. We've got 1,663 buses going in and out of the university daily, and I wonder what the effect is.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): And these guys want to kill it.

Mr. Sergio: And they want to kill it. On top of that, the most shameful thing is—this would create some 35,000 or 40,000 jobs for the construction of this subway extension.

What is even more unfortunate—I'm glad to see that my NDP friends are here—is that it comes from the NDP leader, who usually speaks for the environment and jobs. Here we are, and he's speaking against the people, not only of Toronto—and he has shown such a wickedness, speaking against Toronto—but also against the people of Thunder Bay and the people in northwestern Ontario. My friendly companion here, Gilles Bisson, comes from up north, and Bombardier is up north, isn't it? That employs a lot of people and ultimately would be working for the extension of the subway to York University. Isn't that amazing, that instead of bringing forth the best, positive side of the budget, we tend to tear it down?

Mr. Bisson: Mario, this is hogwash. Nobody said anything about cancelling subways.

Mr. Sergio: Well, let me read; let me take a couple of minutes. Mr. Hampton said, "We don't need another subway mega-project that might perhaps happen sometime four, five years or six years from now extending the subway line into a lightly populated York region." Can you believe that coming from Mr. Hampton?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the member from Timmins—James Bay bothering you, there?

Mr. Bisson: No. I was just helping him out.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, he's not in his seat. Member for York West.

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Mr. Sergio: I want to wrap it up. We have seen over the years that when they cut, we build. They closed hospitals; we built hospitals. They closed schools; we built new schools. They cut doctors and nurses; we provided more help. This is what we are doing, and this is what the budget does—especially when it comes to seniors, particularly in my area, children and working-class families.

I'm going to give the floor to my colleague. I thank the House for listening.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's a real pleasure to be able to speak about our budget tonight. I know that my colleagues talked about some of the specifics. I'm going to talk about some of the broader things and how it has been received in my riding.

Before I go there, I heard from my friends across the aisle, the Tories and the NDP, about our credibility. Well, I'm not going to make up things. I'm going to quote some of the things that the local newspaper, the Cobourg Star, printed while Mr. Tory was in the riding, so bear with me.

This quote is from March 4: "During a stop in Cobourg on Tuesday, opposition leader John Tory reported cataract surgery wait times at the local hospital were up. He reiterated it at a health care round table discussion in Brighton yesterday and issued a media release that stated 'the wait for cataract surgeries at Northumberland Hills Hospital is up by 15%'."

I'm not going to read what I said, because it's probably unparliamentary, but let me tell you what CEO Joan Ross from Northumberland Hills Hospital said.

"Last month the average wait to have cataract surgery in Northumberland Hills Hospital was 21 days, hospital president Joan Ross said in an interview yesterday. In January it was 23 and in December it was 16.

"I think we have the lowest, or one of the lowest, wait times (in Ontario)."

Interjections.

Mr. Rinaldi: But I'm not finished.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rinaldi: I want you to pay attention.

This is the editorial from March 8: "Of course, Tory's main objective was to discredit the current Liberal government and that's what opposition parties do."

I agree with that. But in this case, there was more at stake than just the Liberal Party's record of management on the health care unit; there was the reputation of the Northumberland Hills Hospital and its management.

From the same editorial:

"Apparently, this is not the first time Mr. Tory and his staff have lashed out using incorrect figures."

Interjections.

Mr. Rinaldi: But I'm not finished with what the editorial says.

"And, of course, we all remember the \$5.5-billion deficit the PC government of Mike Harris, Ernie Eves and Doug Galt left behind."

And they called—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Hold it, member for Northumberland. We're supposed to just have a pleasant time here at night sittings. I can't hear the member for Northumberland because of the cross-talk here, so shall we listen to the member for Northumberland?

Mr. Rinaldi: I'm going to finish with one last line from the editorial: "That deficit, fudged"—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: What does the member for Simcoe North not understand about "Order"?

Member for Northumberland.

Mr. Rinaldi: "That deficit, fudged by the PCs during the election campaign"—that's what they know. So that was the credibility of those folks who are criticizing us.

Now, I'm going to talk about what people said about the budget—not what I said, but what the people in the riding and some of the newspapers said. Let me quote:

"Cobourg mayor Peter Delanty said the really good news in the Ontario budget was twofold: direct funding for children in low-income families and a monthly increase in housing assistance....

"And from the county level," because we do have a county level of government, "uplifting"—

Mr. O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member of Durham on a point of order. What section of the standing orders?

Mr. O'Toole: With respect, I would ask the Speaker to rule on whether or not the member for Northumberland is speaking to the motion before us, which is a time allocation motion on this budget.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order. It's a very broad motion that we're discussing tonight. Member for Northumberland.

Mr. Rinaldi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anyway, he went on to say, "from the county government level, 'uplifting' these social costs will help with the bottom line ... just as the province has by paying more for ambulance services and health unit costs."

This is a classic. This is a quote about the Conservative candidate in my riding, Mrs. Galt. Listen to this.

Interjection: The Conservative candidate.

Mr. Rinaldi: On the Conservative candidate: "Local riding Conservative candidate Cathy Galt supported the Liberals' Ontario child benefit and lauded" the Liberal

government. So I wonder why Mr. Tory and the rest of the party voted against our budget the other day.

I've got a couple of minutes and I've got a couple of other quotes from people in my riding.

"Port Hope Mayor Linda Thompson"—who was just elected for the first time—"was not only excited about increased infrastructure funding to address the \$130-million deficit in her municipality ... but says the \$10 million announced to extend high-speed Internet"—that's broadband—"service into rural areas like Northumberland is very 'beneficial.'"

"For economic development, there must be this level of communication, she said."

Let me tell you what the Port Hope and District Chamber of Commerce said: "Port Hope and District Chamber of Commerce vice-chair Lynda Kay agreed that both small business and home-based businesses benefit from the installation of broadband services.

"Ms. Kay endorsed the phasing out of the business education tax over the next seven years, investment in roads, plus the phasing in of the increase in the minimum wage from \$8 hourly to \$10.25 over three years, because in this way the impact won't be as severe as a sudden change would be."

I could go on and on here. Let me tell you what was in the Trentonian. It's also an Osprey paper, not very friendly to us, but there, you understand—and I'll end there.

"Northumberland-Quinte West"—which is a new riding—"should be pleased with the amount of good news contained in Thursday's ... provincial budget." That was an editorial. So they can talk all they want, but this is reality. That's what the people are saying in my riding.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Davenport.

Applause.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This is a classic first. To get applause from the opposition is really something that I appreciate very deeply.

I was at a meeting tonight at 6 o'clock in my riding. The people there told me that members of Parliament are speaking much too fast and are not speaking clearly enough, and they were begging me to speak distinctly, and I will try to do that. I would hope that members will take this into account.

The budget was crafted with a vision in mind, a good Liberal vision, and that vision is to create opportunity for all Ontarians. We are finding ourselves in a global world, in a global economy, and consequently we are competing not just locally but globally. That means that if Ontarians want to maintain the kind of standard of life that we're used to, we necessarily have to be more competitive. While we're speaking tonight, we also know that there is a shift of wealth taking place away from North America and away from Europe. Just think about this: The United States of America is this year borrowing from China—that is, the People's Republic of China—more than \$500 billion. We're talking about a shift of wealth.

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Let's say, for instance, that an Ontario worker gets \$10 an hour. Of course, most workers—let's take the median—get a lot more. But for the \$10 an hour a factory worker gets, he competes with a person in the Third World for less than \$1 an hour. It's obvious what takes place here. The only way we can possibly compete, the only way we can possibly maintain our wealth and maybe begin to shift back this transfer of wealth, is to ensure that Ontarians have the competitive edge. What does that mean? That means, obviously, that we have to look at this specific budget, because in the budget, we're trying to create the opportunity.

First, for the first time we have a new ministry, the Ministry of Research and Innovation. It's the Premier.

Second, we have to be competitive in education, because it is only through innovation and research, it is only through maintaining and ensuring that people stay in school and get as much education as possible—only in that way can we possibly ensure that we are competitive.

It's important to understand and look at the figures. We're spending, in education, over \$800 million. It means more teachers. What about post-secondary education? Did you look at the figures? Did you look at the figures here? Post-secondary education is delivering 75,000 new spaces. This budget is doubling student aid. That should be applauded. Now nobody applauds—but I don't want to get into that, because I don't want to be partisan about this. This budget should be supported by every member of the Legislature, including the opposition. If you weren't partisan, you'd applaud that as well.

Apprenticeship programs in the riding of Davenport alone—I had the minister come in and talk about apprenticeship and providing apprenticeship training, carpentry, for women in need. Imagine that. That was never the case before. Providing a carpentry apprenticeship program—what a wonderful idea. Let's face it: This may not necessarily be a Liberal idea, but isn't it a good idea?

Interjection: It's a great idea.

Mr. Ruprecht: It's a great idea.

Interjections.

Mr. Ruprecht: Let me give you an example: between Diamond Aircraft and Fanshawe College, \$1 million for apprenticeship programs, and it goes right across Ontario—it isn't just London, it isn't just Toronto, but right from Windsor over to Sudbury, over to Wawa, over to Thunder Bay, right across Ontario. That's the apprenticeship program the Liberals are trying to institute. Do you know what? We're being told that to be competitive we need to have better roads and we need to have a better transportation system. I don't want to talk about the subway, and I don't want to talk about the NDP and how they went back on the subway going to North York; I don't want to talk about that. What I'm simply saying is: Infrastructure services are an important item in becoming competitive. We can't have a truck driver sitting in gridlock and wasting gas and wasting time.

Finally, health care: It's competitive. Publicly funded health care brings investment to Ontario.

Let's tie competitiveness and the economy to our working poor. The working poor need to be supported. We're all in this together. We're in the same boat, but we've got a captain. His name is McGuinty. This captain knows that on this ship we're all together. We need one another. We need to work in harmony. We need to have the opposition onside, whether that's the NDP, which sometimes brings up good and positive proposals, or the Progressive Conservative Party, which brings up good and positive proposals—they should be listened to. It's part of our budget—we're all-encompassing. Our intent is big, our intent is large; it includes you as well, and that's why we don't want to be partisan tonight. That is not part of this budget. That's why I appreciate the member from the NDP saying he's got some good—

Interjection.

Mr. Ruprecht: Listen, I listened to you tonight carefully and you said there were some positive ideas in this budget. Why don't you agree when I say that? You said that tonight. Stand up and be counted and say, "Yes, this is a good budget," because that's what you said earlier. Don't change your mind now. I have you on record, an NDP member saying there are good, positive suggestions and good, positive policies in this budget. You said it and now—just a minute—we've got it on record.

Since we're all in this boat together, what we need is to work together in harmony. What we need is to help each other. How does this Liberal budget help each other? How does this Liberal budget help the working poor? Look, the minimum wage—

Interjection.

Mr. Ruprecht: I don't want to be partisan, as I said. Don't look at me and don't tell me—what did I hear about the minimum wage from the NDP? The member from Sudbury is telling me 15 cents for five years, and there's criticism against us for raising the minimum wage 75 cents per year. That means it's over \$10 in a very short time. What about the shelter allowance to help the working poor? If you're making less than \$20,000, you're getting \$100 for a shelter allowance. What about

child care and child care spaces? What about the \$250 in this budget that will be given to every child in Ontario this year? Not only that, but we're increasing it to \$600; injured workers, 2.5% per year; ODSP payments; social assistance.

My time is up. Let me simply say this—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Your time is up.

Mr. Caplan has moved government notice of motion number 323. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2117 to 2127.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Parsons, Ernie
Balkissoon, Bas	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bartolucci, Rick	Levac, Dave	Ramal, Khalil
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Marsales, Judy	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Matthews, Deborah	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Mauro, Bill	Ruprecht, Tony
Chan, Michael	McNeely, Phil	Sandals, Liz
Colle, Mike	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sergio, Mario
Craitor, Kim	Milloy, John	Smith, Monique
Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol	Smitherman, George
Gerretsen, John	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Van Bommel, Maria
Kular, Kuldip	Oraziotti, David	Watson, Jim

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Dunlop, Garfield	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Elliott, Christine	O'Toole, John
Bisson, Gilles	Martiniuk, Gerry	Savoline, Joyce

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 36; the nays are 9.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being 9:30 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 10 of the clock on Thursday, April 12.

The House adjourned at 2130.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Burlington	Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
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No. 156

N° 156

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**
Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 12 April 2007

Jeudi 12 avril 2007



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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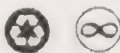
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Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 12 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 12 avril 2007

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (REPLACEMENT WORKERS), 2007 LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS)

Mr. Kormos moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 192, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 / Projet de loi 192, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Kormos, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Thank you, Speaker.

Jack London gives us a little bit of guidance in this whole matter. He wrote:

"After God had finished the rattlesnake, the toad, and the vampire, he had some awful substance left with which he made a scab.

"A scab is a two-legged animal with a corkscrew soul, a water brain, a combination backbone of jelly and glue. Where others have hearts, he carries a tumour of rotten principles."

I'm grateful to Jack London for having given us that insight a century ago.

You'll recall—you surely will—back in 1993 when the NDP government of the day outlawed, Bill 40 outlawed, scabs in the province of Ontario. The legislation, of course, refers to them as "replacement workers." But down where I come from in Niagara, and where my colleagues come from, whether it's here in Toronto or Hamilton or Timmins—James Bay or Kenora—Rainy River or the Sudbury area, people who cross picket lines and take workers' jobs when those workers are involved in oftentimes life-and-death struggles to keep good jobs in their community, to ensure fair shares of the wealth that they create, to ensure safer workplaces, to ensure some modest pension plans that permit them to retire with even a basic level of decency and dignity—when

those workers are on a picket line fighting for those things, women or men who would cross that picket line to take their jobs, while the legislation calls them replacement workers, are scabs, the very same sort of scabs that Jack London talked about.

In that period of time when scabs were banned in the province of Ontario—and we recall the history. When the Conservatives got elected in 1995, they repealed the anti-scab provisions of Bill 40, along with a whole lot of other things. But in that period of time, there were fewer work stoppages here in the province of Ontario. When there were work stoppages, they were of a shorter duration. And the tragedy of working women or men being assaulted, mutilated or killed on picket lines was averted. And we don't have to go back that far to understand that that prospect of a picketing worker being assaulted, mutilated or killed isn't a fiction or a matter of a mere fanciful imagination.

I remember being on the picket line with Navistar workers down in Chatham after one of their brothers, Don Milner, a CAW member from Windsor, was brutally injured when a van operated by a scab-protection security guard drove over Mr. Milner, brother Milner, and injured five other CAW members at a picket line at that Navistar plant on the outskirts of Chatham. I remember the factory well. It was back in June 2002. Mr. Milner broke his pelvis, required hours of surgery, and spent an incredible amount of time in hospital. A 21-year-old employee of London Protection Inc.—it's a strike-breaking operation—was charged with dangerous driving. London Protection Inc., of course, was hired by Navistar to break the strike at their international truck plant in Chatham.

October 2000, here in the greater Toronto area, Mississauga: 450 workers on strike at CFM Majestic Inc. As soon as those picket lines were set up, burly security guards were sent out there, intimidating and harassing those strikers. These are the guards—you've seen them. They're the ones with the shaved heads—it's all about the image—dressed from head to toe in black uniforms and black caps and military jackboots. As the workers tried to block buses filled with scabs to prevent them from crossing the picket line—peacefully, peaceably—guards were brutally slamming those workers aside and out of the way. I can go on: workers terrorized by strike-breakers in Sudbury, Falconbridge, in 2000, and the company Accufax; another scab protection operation, a scab delivery company.

1010

This is all about values. No worker takes lightly the decision to withdraw their labour from the workplace, but

what could be a more fundamental right in any democratic society? Because surely it's a hallmark of a democratic society when we ensure that workers do have that right to withdraw their labour when lawful negotiations around a contract break down. Surely this Legislature is going to protect the right of that worker to withdraw his or her labour. And no worker ever makes that decision lightly. I want to repeat that.

As for lockouts, I say to you that we should condemn those outright, because they withdraw from the worker his or her contractual right to negotiate a contract when they put a proverbial gun to that worker's head.

Let me complete the reference to scabs by Jack London. "After God had finished the rattlesnake, the toad and the vampire, he had some awful substance left with which he made a scab.

"A scab is a two-legged animal with a corkscrew soul, a water brain, a combination backbone of jelly and glue. Where others have hearts, he carries a tumour of rotten principles.

"When a scab comes down the street, men turn their backs and angels weep in heaven, and the devil shuts the gates of hell to keep him out.

"No man (or woman) has a right to scab so long as there is a pool of water to drown his carcass in, or a rope long enough to hang his body with. Judas was a gentleman compared with a scab. For betraying his master, he had character enough to hang himself. A scab has not.

"Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Judas sold his Saviour for thirty pieces of silver. Benedict Arnold sold his country for a promise of a commission in the British army. The scab sells his birthright, country, his wife, his children and his fellow men for an unfulfilled promise from his employer.

"Esau was a traitor to himself; Judas was a traitor to his God; Benedict Arnold was a traitor to his country; a scab is a traitor to his God, his country, his family and his class."

As New Democrats, we stand here unhesitatingly in solidarity with workers in this province and beyond, and in our efforts to restore anti-scab legislation to the province of Ontario. It is only with anti-scab legislation that we can restore that tradition created in the early 1990s—in 1993 to be specific, when Bill 40 passed—of peaceful contract negotiations with minimal work stoppages, with safety on picket lines on the rare occasion that they do develop, and with an assurance that contract disputes will be resolved at the negotiating table rather than with armed goons, strikebreakers and scabs hauled in through smoke-mirrored buses, crashing through picket lines of women and men trying to better their lot in their workplace and in their community.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London—Fanshawe): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to speak and comment on Bill 192, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995, introduced by Mr. Kormos, the member from Niagara Centre.

I've been listening carefully to Mr. Kormos. I know his passion about this issue. Hopefully, he can extend his passion to the leader of his party, especially when he was against the extension of the subway, which can eliminate a lot of work in the province of Ontario. We, as a party and as a government, were trying to create more jobs in order to have more workers working. Hopefully, they will have a consolidated effort in one direction.

Anyway, we're talking about Bill 192, which I think is very important. We live in a democratic society. We live in a society where we should be respecting the human rights of everyone, especially when workers who have some kind of dispute go out of their job and may be looking for more money and better conditions for their safety in the work they do. It's a very important issue.

A couple of times since I was elected I introduced a bill to erect a monument outside of this place to remember people who died while they were working, to commemorate people who have given their lives, efforts, talents, skills and physical abilities to build this province, which is very important.

This bill talks about how we can create a balance between employers and workers. I think it's very important because most of the time, when workers go to work and give their ability, attention and skills to build a factory or build a company, the company makes more money and a lot of progress, and I think they are obligated to support their workers and give them more attention. That's why most of the time disputes happen between workers and companies or employers. I think we should have fair treatment. That doesn't mean we should replace them when they go on strike or are locked out. It's a dangerous situation.

I want to commend the member from Niagara Centre, and also our Minister of Labour who worked very hard to create that balance since we were elected in 2003. If you want to talk about work stoppages, I think you'll see a minimal level in God knows how many years. I think if we are able, through mediation, to create some kind of balance and bring a lot of agreements to the bargaining table which are mitigated by our Minister of Labour and the special people who work in the Ministry of Labour, that is going to create peace and tranquillity between employers and workers or people who work in different locations and different places.

I'll give you some examples. We brought in a four-year agreement with the elementary and secondary teachers' support staff; also the Ontario public service health care workers, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, the city of Toronto inside and outside workers and several dozen other large municipalities. They created some kind of agreement between the employers and employees due to our understanding of the importance of those workers. The agreements give the ability.

I know it's against human rights to place workers at many different times in many different locations, especially when they strike on a picket line. They shouldn't be forced out, injured, killed, harassed or abused. They have the right to strike in order to better their conditions,

better their situations, maybe for more money or more safety in the workplace. It's very important to create that dialogue and that understanding. Most of the time, we are able through mediation to create that harmony between employers and workers.

I understand that the member from Niagara Centre wants to repeal Bill 7, I believe, which amended the Bill 40 in 1992. I think it's important to deal with the issue and look into it because we owe the workers a lot of respect. We should support them in whatever they do in their daily life, but we have to create that balance, as I mentioned at the beginning.

Some workers work in hospitals, for instance, ambulances, or in correctional services, and what do you do? Do you leave the jails empty of protection or the jailed people out on the street without any protection? I don't know. It's a very delicate issue. I think we should be dealing with it and be open to suggestions.

The member from Niagara Centre brought up some different issues that brought important elements to the situations that should be dealt with. All workers are entitled to go on strike without any hesitation or fear of being replaced at any time and they should also be allowed to express themselves with passion, and they should be supported. Most of the time we are able, by negotiation, to reach an agreement. What's happened many different times is that we have a government and a minister who are open to talks and able to bring the two parties to the table to try to counsel both sides in order to reach an agreement for the sake of the work, for the sake of the workers and for the sake of the cities or the whole society at large.

1020

I think it's important to talk about the important elements of our society, especially since we live in Ontario, a province that strongly believes in workers and in people who give their lives, their abilities and their skills to build this province, especially in the auto industry. At the present time, we have the best auto industry locations in the whole world and we have a lot of workers who work in different agencies, companies and factories, and also many different elements in our society. It is very important to give the right to workers to express themselves the way they want without harming our society, without hurting others. I think it's important to open up the subject and talk about it, and hopefully the member for Niagara Centre understands the importance also of keeping all the elements working without jeopardizing our society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak. Hopefully we can reach a situation where we can create a more peaceful, democratic and open workplace for the sake of human rights and the sake of the rights of all the people who work and give their life and ability to others.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Labour relations, labour bills, labour laws are always an interesting subject to debate. However, in close to 12 years in this House, in all the time that we've talked about labour law and the issues surrounding labour and management, the confrontations, the co-operation, the building of relationships

between labour and business, the one thing that has seemed to be a constant in all of those conversations is the word "balance." There has to be a balance between what labour requires and what management requires in order to accomplish the goals of those two parties.

It strikes me that the modern way to balance those goals, those two needs, is that more and more we're finding that labour and management's goals are the same. They both want success for the company. They both want the company to do better, which will result in higher-paying jobs and more jobs. They both want success in that area and to be competitive in that area. That requires not only the partnership between labour and management; more and more in today's environment it requires the partnership of government as well. It strikes me that in what I call the old days of labour and management relationships, there was a constant confrontation between the two.

This week, when we've celebrated and remembered the victory at Vimy Ridge, we've remembered those people who sacrificed themselves on that very noble hill for Canada and indeed for the world and world peace. That victory was more than just a military victory. It was much more than that. Not only was it the day that Canada came together, as they say—although some debate that, as I saw in the press—I believe strongly that it was the day Canada came together as a nation on that battlefield. It was the first time they had fought together, but more than that, they fought in a way that nobody had fought before. The individuals in the trenches, the privates, the corporals, the sergeants, they were given maps. They were given goals. They were involved in the plan. And being involved in the plan, they knew they weren't just going over the top, out of the trenches, across the field and into the machine guns. That's what had happened for the last three or four years in that war. It was just a matter of putting the number of manpower that you could into the field in order to hopefully gain the position of the machine gun. Man's ability to kill had outstripped his ability to attack those positions. But at Vimy the Canadian soldiers were given maps of the trenches. They were given maps of the lay of the land. They knew what was happening. They were involved in the plan. They knew what their objective was. That had not happened before. And when you involved those people to that degree in the great objective of taking Vimy Ridge, taking the hill that dominated the plains in that part of France—whoever owned the hill owned the plains. Involving those people in that push became the decisive point in the victory at Vimy Ridge.

I think that labour management was at that same crisis some years ago. When people found out that if they involved labour in their management plans, if they involved labour intimately in their progress and in what they wanted to accomplish in their goals and aims, they became a very much more successful company than the companies with labour and management that were constantly at loggerheads and fighting each other.

I think this bill does not encourage that co-operation between management and labour. It doesn't make for the

one-team effort that any jurisdiction has to have in order to be successful in today's marketplace when we are desperately trying to be competitive, when we are desperately trying to be as good as anyone else in the world, if we're going to maintain our standard of living and the way in which we live in this wonderful province of Ontario. This bill doesn't do that.

This bill goes back to the 1990s. What happened in the 1990s? We've had experience with this bill. This bill basically reinstates Bill 40, which was one of the most controversial labour bills ever put forward in this province. People were in the galleries in this House, they were almost coming through the doors out here. They broke through the front doors of the Legislature trying to get at the government that was doing this. It wasn't a very popular piece of legislation at the time. Then, of course, when our government took it out with Bill 7 in 1995, the other group was here in the galleries and in the front hall creating quite a stir as well.

But let's go back to 1990, when we have experience as to what this bill would do to the province of Ontario. Granted, there was a US recession in 1991, but by the second quarter of 1992, the US was out of their recession and the economy was starting its climb in the longest economic boom that the United States and Canadian economies have ever seen. In fact, that boom is still going on. It had a little hiccup in 2000-01; it was not a recession. It is continuing to grow through today. There are some weaknesses in the US and Canadian economies. The US economy has weaknesses in the housing area, and the automotive industry in the United States seems to be a little weak at the moment, but by and large that economy is chugging along in extremely good fashion and is continuing to go even after such a long run.

What happened in Canada? The rest of Canada, not including Ontario, over the period of 1990 to 1995, the four and a half years of the Bob Rae government, created 80,000 new jobs. That's about a normal gain of new jobs in the rest of Canada over any four-and-a-half-year period. There were better times in some areas and there were worse times in other areas, but that's about average, especially when you work in that there was a recession in the heartland of Canada, in Ontario, that didn't seem to want to go away.

During that same period of four and a half years of Bob Rae's government that ran from September 6, 1990, to June 8, 1995, Ontario lost 10,000 jobs. So the rest of Canada gained 80,000 jobs; Ontario lost 10,000 jobs. Something was obviously happening in Ontario that was not happening in the rest of Canada. What was that? That was the Bob Rae government, which had a very adversarial approach to business.

When you take that adversarial approach to business, business and capital have wings and they go to a jurisdiction that is friendlier to them, and they take their jobs with them. So all the labour that you're trying to protect with legislation like this—it's actually creating higher unemployment. That's what happened in Ontario when this type of legislation came in.

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Many businesses from Ontario went to the United States, and mainly to Buffalo, where they could set up and supply their Canadian customers, their Ontario customers. That jurisdiction was a much more friendly jurisdiction than Ontario. So many companies went to Buffalo that Buffalo made Bob Rae their man of the year because he had created such an economic boom in Buffalo because of legislation like this and because of the high taxes that he continued to increase and put on business and taxpayers of all ilk.

This bill is very much from the 1930s and the 1940s. It's very much a setback to the labour dominance of the early 1990s in Ontario, the Bob Rae years. This would set labour relations back 50 years. This piece of legislation does not create the team spirit that you need within management. This legislation does not create the linked unity of labour relations and management relations in Ontario's economy. This legislation doesn't create the common goal that labour and management need if they're going to be successful in the 21st century.

Labour relations today is not the confrontational stuff of the past. Labour relations today is about building teams and about building a future for this great province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for York South–Weston.

Applause.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): Applause from the Conservative benches, too.

I'm very pleased to rise in this House this morning to speak to this important bill that has been put forth by my colleague the member for Niagara Centre. I know that my party's time is limited, so I shall only take up four or five minutes in order that my NDP colleagues can also get a chance to participate in this debate.

This bill means a great deal to me personally. I was raised in a union household. My father is an active trade unionist, a proud member of the United Steelworkers for nearly three decades now. My mother was an active member of the UFCW. Growing up, it was the union that made my family strong. There were times when that strength was challenged by strikes and work stoppages. However, we were always comforted by knowing that there were laws that gave my parents important rights and protection when it came to bargaining for improved working conditions, salaries and benefits.

In my own case, my very first elected position was as a 14-year-old shop steward at a drugstore outlet that belonged to one of the big chains of the day. For nearly five years, I juggled high school, a part-time job and representing the best interests of more than a couple of dozen of my colleagues, most of them students and seniors, who worked alongside me as members of the UFCW. I learned a great deal. While we never had to go through a strike during my five years as a store clerk, as a cashier and as a union rep, there were a couple of instances where bargaining went right down to the wire.

But we never had to walk a picket line, and for that I felt that we were fortunate.

In 1992, as I was leaving my union position to go on to university, the landscape for unionized workers in this province fighting for their rights was much different than it is today. We were treated as equals, and the playing field was level. That was largely a result of the groundbreaking legislation that was passed by the government of the day. My colleague from Hamilton East is here this morning, and if members will recall, it was one of her predecessors from that riding, the Minister of Labour, the legendary Mr. Mackenzie, who toiled tirelessly to bring into effect the seminal labour relations legislation that provided workers with fairness, real protection and full rights when it came to job action. That legislation gave us labour peace and, in fact, contributed to economic growth during a time of great economic uncertainty. In the two years following the passage of Mr. Mackenzie's legislation, Ontario saw the creation of nearly 170,000 well-paying jobs. Compare and contrast that with the present situation, during which we have witnessed the recent loss of more than 120,000 jobs in manufacturing alone.

That pioneering piece of legislation was gutted in 1995 by the anti-worker Conservative regime. Since then, striking workers and their families have been pummelled and pilloried across this province. Their rights were stripped away, and we see the heavy toll that this has taken across Ontario.

It's union-busting at its worst: large, very profitable enterprises whipping workers into line, taking advantage of legislation that this present government has refused to take action on. We see strikes lasting months and months, if indeed they are resolved at all; unionized workers essentially being beaten into submission, hopelessly watching as scabs—and I say this, scabs who themselves are victims of the present flawed system that pits worker against worker, man versus man, woman versus woman—ride buses across the picket lines.

We need to restore the rights of striking workers. We need this bill passed into law so that Ontario's unionized workers can once again be given full and equal rights when it comes to taking job action.

I especially urge members on the government side, many of them from proud blue-collar union towns like Sarnia, North Bay, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Niagara Falls and Cornwall, to name just a few, to stand up and be counted on this legislation. I say to them, give your constituents—the hard-working women and men and their families who have been victimized by 12 years of iron-fisted anti-union rule—the protection they so richly deserve.

These workers and their families can count on the members of the NDP caucus to stand here and stand up for what's right. This morning, I challenge the members of the Liberal government to rise in their places and do the same and support this bill.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I'm pleased to join in the debate this morning with respect to Bill 192, An Act to amend the Labour Rela-

tions Act, 1995, brought forward by the member from Niagara Centre. Before doing that, though, I want to take the opportunity to congratulate the member from Davenport, who was here just a few moments ago and had to step out briefly, on his speech last night, as we had debated a motion until about 9:20 prior to the vote. I arrived home last night about a quarter after 10. My wife, as she welcomed me home, said, "Who was the fellow who was talking at the end of the evening just before you adjourned?" She commented that his speech was extremely well done, well-understood and articulate. So I'm going to try to take a bit of a lesson today, if I can, from the member from Davenport. I think he started off by saying that his constituents were telling him, when he was at a community meeting prior to being here for his speech, during part of the evening, that they found that we spoke too quickly and didn't articulate. I'm known to speak quickly in my family; my mother did, and my aunt and my children. I'm going to try to slow down a bit and maybe try to articulate more.

Like many of us in this House, we probably have some roots in our families in the labour movement. My first summer job was working on what is the Toronto city hall in the mid 1960s. I remember walking up many flights of stairs carrying boxes of insulation. I worked for the International Brotherhood of Heat and Frost Insulators, Local 95. My father worked there throughout his career on any number of job sites, both private sector and in some cases public sector job sites. So like many of us, I have a history within our household of the likes of working in and of those who have made their living and raised their families in that movement.

I would suggest that our government understands the importance of stable labour relations. Just last evening, Minister Peters addressed the Ontario Construction Secretariat here in our own building. That's a group of both employers and employees that operates as the secretariat. They spoke to the support that the minister has shown to employers and employees through the Ontario Construction Secretariat and the working relationship that exists through that organization, particularly in their role in the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors of construction.

We have been through a history, quite a history, in collective bargaining in the past several years. Negotiations have taken place in almost every part of the broader public sector. We came to office, and at that time, Minister Kennedy, then the Minister of Education prior to leaving for other endeavours, was instrumental in working with employers and employees in the elementary and secondary school systems to put in place long-term contracts, the longest-term contracts that had been negotiated between the parties in history—four-year contracts—for some peace and stability in the educational sector.

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Minister Phillips, in my early days here, was responsible for—and is responsible for, but I worked with him as his parliamentary assistant—negotiations with the On-

tario Public Service Employees Union and negotiated a fair and equitable contract with that group. I was honoured and pleased to be able to participate in that and watch that process unfold on the government side, watch that process unfold of those structured negotiations and the success that occurred in those.

It certainly would be our view that government has to show the lead in respect to setting standards for negotiations to create some fairness and stability and equity within the labour movement. Over the past number of years, quite a number of years, one has to look at some statistics, I guess, to determine how successful legislation is, how successful the capacity to sit across the table and negotiate contracts in a fair way, and, in the event that there is a strike or lockout, to be able to bring those to a conclusion in as equitable and as quick a way as possible.

I'm looking here at work stoppages. In 1975—it was in 1975 that I started my teaching career. As a matter of fact, I think I was teaching two or three days before we were locked out. So my own personal experience was one of starting a career and finding myself out the door in a matter of days. That was resolved reasonably quickly at that point in time. But under Ontario jurisdiction there were some three-million-plus days lost in 1975 to strikes or lockouts. As a matter of fact, during the period from 1975 to 1984, that decade period, there were years in which there were 1.6 million, 2.9 million, 2.5 million, 2.2 million days lost. In only one of those years were the days lost to strikes or lockouts less than one million; there were 760,000 in that particular year.

Things improved between 1985 and 1994. It was only in 1990 that there were just under three million days lost to strikes or lockouts. There were three other years in which there were a million plus, and some five years or so, five or six years, in which there were a million, 900,000, 800,000 and as low as 371,000 days lost. That was in 1993, during the time that the NDP government was in place.

From 1995 to the present: In 1996, 1997 and 1998, we had losses through strikes or lockouts of 1.9 million days, 1.9 million days, one million days, and then again in 2002 a loss of 1.5 million days to strikes or lockouts.

I think when government sets the tone, the mood in the industry at large changes. In the years 2003 to 2005, we've seen less than half a million person-days lost to strikes or lockouts in matters under Ontario jurisdiction. As a matter of fact, in 2006 it's dropped to virtually the lowest level except for one other year that I can see, to some 394,600 persons-days lost, and that's acknowledging the growth in the labour force during that period of time. I think if government takes a strong lead and if you build strong relationships, you can set the tone for others in the industries that are out there. What we've seen is an increasing diminution of days lost to strikes and lockouts. What we've seen is 97% of recent contracts being negotiated without strike or lockout.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

I draw members' attention to the members' west gallery. We are joined by Bob Huget, member for Sarnia

of the provincial Parliament in the 35th Parliament. Welcome.

Further debate? The member for—don't tell me—Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): Nepean—Carleton; thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes people confuse me and the member from Ottawa—Orléans, because we look so much alike. He looks good with long red hair. In any event, Mr. Speaker, I'm just teasing him because our ridings are adjacent, and he's a good fellow.

I'm happy to be joining the debate today. When I was a kid growing up, my dad had a bit of a background in these sorts of things. Being my dad—everybody here has a father or mother that they just adored—I would follow my dad around. He was the chair of the unemployment appeals board, the chairman of referees, back in the 1980s and 1990s, and to this day he's still on the Nova Scotia Labour Relations Board—and he has a business background himself. So these sorts of issues would come up from time to time. One thing I learned as a child, following in my dad's footsteps, is that you have to have a balance and a sense of co-operation among management and labour and staff, and it must be progressive. With all due respect—because I do have the greatest respect for my colleague from Niagara—I don't think we can support this, because I don't think this is as progressive and as forward-looking as I would like to see a bill like this; I think it takes us back a little bit in time.

Today, in this Legislature and in these modern times, we must be talking about other issues that can improve our economy here in Ontario. We should be looking forward, particularly with thousands upon thousands of manufacturing jobs leaving this province, and we should be thinking about how to attract business so that the people in my riding of Nepean—Carleton and the people in all of Ottawa and eastern Ontario and Ontario in general are going to have good-paying jobs and some stability in their lives so that they can send their children off to college and they can save for their retirement. We should be using our time today to bring Ontario from worst to first in terms of economic growth. When I learned earlier this year that we were lagging, in this province, the biggest province in Confederation, behind Prince Edward Island, Canada's smallest province, I was very disappointed, and I think that we should be spending more time in the Legislature thinking about that and trying to bring jobs to this province.

We should be talking about something that impacts farmers in my riding, throughout eastern Ontario and throughout all of rural Ontario, and that is the lack of a risk management strategy for workers on farms, who are spending countless hours working on the family farm. Unfortunately, with the recent budget cuts, systemic budget cuts since this Liberal government has taken office, the farmers in my riding are just at wits' end. We can't see any more cuts and slashes to the Ministry of Agriculture.

I also think we should be talking about changes to the labour laws in this province that would make it easier for

people to make organ donations. If people are expected to take some time off work to donate a liver or another vital organ, we should be making it easier for them to give the gift of life.

Finally, I think we should be spending time in this Legislature discussing companies that, despite the fact that we have eliminated the mandatory age of retirement, still force their employees out the door at the age of 55. I know that's happening and I've heard it has been happening, for example, in places like Wolseley Canada, which is just reprehensible. We shouldn't be doing that. We have come too far as a society.

Just to recap, we need to have a good balance of co-operation between management and unions. We should be protecting those employees who have been working hard. We've said that they don't need to be retiring at 65, and we should be looking at those types of issues. We should be looking at risk management strategies for the family farm, we should be looking at generating economic growth in this province to bring us from worst to first, and we should be talking about the ability to make it easier for people to take time off from work to give the gift of life.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Applause.

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Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): Thank you, colleagues.

Certainly we forget very easily in this province what is real and what is not. I too grew up in a union household, like many of my colleagues, and I listened with fascination to my colleague from York South–Weston. My background was a little different and my father a little older. He remembered the labour movement of the 1930s, the 1940s, the 1950s and the 1960s. He was not only a union member, but he was a union organizer. I remember waiting for my dad to come home, and we didn't know, first of all, whether he would have a job that day, because union jobs were few and far between in many of those points in history. Also, we didn't know what shape he'd be in when he came home. We didn't know whether he'd have a broken arm, which he did on occasion, or whether he'd be roughed up because of a strike, because of company-organized thugs who would be used to break up strikes, to hurt union members, to hurt workers to force them out of unions.

You know, I listened to the member from Halton about a team—the team of corporation and union member—and I have to say, from my own background as a child watching my father come home, it didn't seem like much of a team to me. It seemed like two very separate entities and sometimes certainly antagonistic entities.

We live in a world also that's not ours alone in Canada. You know that in the United States, the second-largest employer is Manpower temporary agency. Now, that's where we're headed in this province. We're headed to precarious employment, to part-time employment, to non-union employment—that's what's happening. We

live in a volatile situation. You heard my colleague speak about the loss of good manufacturing jobs. That's the reality in which we live and they're being replaced, as I said, by service sector jobs—not well-paying jobs. That's what they're being replaced by. Your chance, if you are an employer, of ever having a visit by a government member to inspect how you treat your workers, is about one per cent.

Essentially we have employment standards that are not being enforced. We all know that a law that's not being enforced is not a law at all, and of course, we do not have card-based certification. The Harris-Eves government eliminated that. McGuinty Liberals denounced it, but have they done anything about it? Absolutely nothing. The McGuinty Liberals have done absolutely nothing about bringing that back, and from what I've heard across the floor and next to me, I'm hoping that at least they will support this motion from our member from Niagara Centre because at least this is a step in the right direction. But I suspect that they will not. We'll see.

So not only have they done nothing to bring back card-based certification, but this is in contrast to how they ran in the last election. I just quote, and this is from now-Minister Dwight Duncan, who said in 1995: “We in this party believe that workers ought to be treated as equals in the economy. We in this party are opposed to the use of scabs. We believe that the amount of violence on the shop floor will increase....it takes us back to a time long, long ago when it wasn't uncommon for the governments of the day to try and break unions or prevent them from coming into our province.” I would love to hear from him now.

Then, the current Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Rick Bartolucci, said: “All you have to do is talk to the people who are on the picket line at Falconbridge to find out that Bill 7”—that's a Tory bill, of course—“hurts labour-management relations. There is absolutely no incentive, none whatsoever, for management to get back to the table, because they're able to use scab labour.”

That's what they said when they were running for office, but now that they're in office, we see a very different set of actions. Again, I would call on my colleagues across the floor to do the right thing here and to vote for this motion. Clearly, this is a step to redressing it, but more than this motion, they also need to bring back card certification.

It's interesting how history repeats itself, because now I'm married to a man who would like to be a member of a union but is not allowed to be a member of a union in this province, because he's a teacher at a community college on contract and part-time. He's been through two strikes, one when he was a TA up at York University and again, in the community college system. It was déjà vu. There I was waiting again, to see if my husband, this time, would come back from the picket line injured, would come back with a job, and even now we wait, because he's not allowed to be a member of the union by this government. We wonder every September, will he

have a job again this year? Even though he's working full-time, he's not considered a member of a union—another action this government has not taken.

Finally, I want to raise one particularly troubling strike here in Ontario in the riding of London North Centre at Huron University College. Food service workers at the Huron University College food court, members of Local 144 of OPSEU, have been on the line since March 26 on strike against the Compass Group. These 20 workers are on strike for fairness, justice, health and safety. These women and men who work preparing and serving food are afforded only one—one—paid sick day per year, despite the fact that they handle food for the public every day. They cannot afford to take unpaid sick days. They simply want a living wage and fair benefits. This employer is bringing in scabs and paying them \$14 an hour—for them; not for the employees, but for the scabs.

No new talks are scheduled. The union is more than willing to get back to the table. This is yet a living, present example of how the McGuinty Liberals are failing union workers. I want to make it clear that New Democrats stand in solidarity with these women and men in London, in their fight for fair wages and dignity.

I'd like to close by saying, shame on the Compass Group for using scabs and paying poverty wages; shame on the member for London North Centre for letting this go under her watch; and finally, absolute and utter shame on the McGuinty Liberal government for their horrendous track record where unionized workers are concerned. Let's pass this motion of my colleague from Niagara Centre and let's do it now.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I want to put on the record my support as the member for Timmins–James Bay, but more importantly as a New Democrat and a trade unionist, for this particular bill.

I didn't grow up in a house of labour; I was in the house of labour. I came out of the labour movement. I worked in the mining industry for a number of years; I was with the United Steelworkers of America, Local 4440; I've bargained collective agreements on behalf of unions. My local—I've also been hired and I was employed within the trade labour movement, both for the Steelworkers and for the Ontario Federation of Labour.

In my experience, I have no doubt in my mind that legislation such as this is necessary. Why? It's because of what my colleague the member from Niagara Centre talks about, which is that you have to basically level the playing field when it comes to the power that the employer can exercise over workers when it comes to collective bargaining. There is no incentive to resolve tough negotiations if an employer knows he can bring scabs into the workplace. All this does—not having legislation that bans the use of scab replacement workers—is basically give the power to the employer to prolong a very difficult situation and negotiations, and not work at trying to find a resolution.

The other part that I want to talk about very quickly is the issue—it was raised, I believe, by one of my colleagues—in regard to the need to end the right for em-

ployers to lock out. I just want to say very quickly—because I know my good friend Andrea Horwath wants to have a few seconds on the bill—that that is very necessary. We currently have, in the city of Timmins, Grant Waferboard, which has basically locked the workers out in Timmins since September of this year. It has no interest in negotiating a collective agreement with the employees. I think that's wrong, it's reprehensible, and we need to have legislation that bans people like Peter Grant from doing what he's doing to the workers in Timmins. I say, high time that we pass legislation to that effect.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I want to join my colleagues in speaking very much in favour of this private member's bill that the member from Niagara Centre has brought forward.

I want to spend the few minutes that I have bringing to light a situation where there are a number of women workers—in fact there are 70 workers at FirstOntario Credit Union in Hamilton: 69 women and one man who work for FirstOntario Credit Union. They have been on strike, trying to get a fair deal from their credit union, since October of last year. These women and this one man are up at their six-month mark for their strike, and it's absolutely unacceptable.

The employer wants to have rollbacks on things like pension eligibility, health benefits and full-time work hours. They're taking these women back to the 1970s and 1960s in terms of working conditions—unacceptable. The only reason that this strike has been able to drag on and on and on is because the employer is able to use replacement workers to do the work of the credit union.

Interjection: Scabs, you mean?

Ms. Horwath: Well, you know what? They're not scabs. In this particular situation, they're management. But management becomes scabs when they start doing the work of the workers in that credit union.

So I'm here to say that on Saturday night I'm going to a fundraiser at the labour council in Hamilton to support these women workers. All of the members of this caucus have bought tickets for that fundraiser. Anybody who's watching, who is from Hamilton and knows the disgrace that's going on at the worst Ontario credit union, an organization that's headed up by a guy who comes from the banking sector, who is used to putting the boots to workers, a guy named Mr. John Lahey—I have to tell you, this man has been an absolute nightmare of a person to work for and try to negotiate with. These women deserve a decent shake and we're going to be there, in terms of our spirit anyway, supporting these women on Saturday night.

1100

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Kormos, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Kormos: As we canvass some of the great history of working-class struggle in this province, be it the Stratford furniture workers strike back in 1933, be it the Oshawa General Motors auto workers strike in 1937 or be it the pivotal workers' struggle, the hallmark of the struggle of the working class in this province, the Ford

Windsor auto workers in 1945—which of course resulted in the Rand formula, we understand, as David Moulton pointed out—the right to organize the union of their choice, the right to a collective agreement and the right to strike, all were rights never willingly given to workers. Rather, they were conceded to them after a tremendous amount of hardship, pain and blood.

I say to colleagues in this chamber that the importance of workers' right to struggle meaningfully has never been greater, as globalization has impacted on every worker and every family and every job in this province. It's not this government that's kept good jobs in the province of Ontario; it's not this government that's protected workers against concessions being forced upon them, and lower and lower wages; it's not this government that's protecting workers from the ravaging and raping of their pensions and pension plans. It's certainly not the corporate world. It's the workers, and workers in their working-class struggle, who are going to fight these things. We as a Legislature have the responsibility to give those working women and men in this province—yes, indeed—a level playing field. That means that when those workers exercise that ultimate function of withdrawing their labour, it's our job to protect them from the violence, the scandal and the assault of scabs, and scabs being bused across their picket lines protected by organized goons like Accufax.

ONTARIO CLIMATE CHANGE ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 SUR LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES EN ONTARIO

Mr. Bisson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 200, An Act to provide for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario / Projet de loi 200, Loi prévoyant la réduction des émissions de gaz à effet de serre en Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Bisson, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to first of all say that I'm extremely proud to stand here as a New Democrat today, along with my colleague Mr. Peter Tabuns, who was the original author of this bill, and the rest of my caucus in regard to this particular issue. I think we've all understood, quite frankly, that this particular issue is one that is fast becoming a huge problem, not only for Ontario but for our planet.

I come from a part of Ontario, northern Ontario, where we're seeing the effects of greenhouse gas emissions probably far more than people realize in other parts of the province. For example, you will know that I represent the Timmins-James Bay riding. We have seen over the last 10 or 15 years huge shifts, as far as patterns, when it comes to climate in the northern part of this province. It used to be, as most of us remember when we were younger, that winter started probably at the end of

November and never ended until about April or May. You knew that you were going to have snowfalls in fairly large amounts, you knew the weather was going to be 20 to 30 below zero for at least two and a half months, and you got ready. That's what you were used to, living in a northern climate.

We are now seeing, basically, green Christmases, something that is unheard-of in northern Ontario, the part that I come from. You are seeing, for example, winter ending in the beginning of March. This year, we were barbecuing, in the city of Timmins, in 18-degree weather at the end of March this year. That is something that tells us that we certainly have a problem when it comes to the effect of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere.

I will also point out another example, one that most people probably don't know because they've never had a chance to travel up there, and that is the James Bay communities. There are winter roads that are established, a winter road from Moosonee up to Attawapiskat that has been basically, for a number of years, put in place in order to transport goods and services to the communities of the James Bay. Normally, that road would be open with ice bridges by sometime in December, and the road would be available for the public and for those who need to use it until, at the very earliest, late March, more times than not into April. We're seeing now that those winter roads are not up and running until about the end of January. So clearly, there are at least 30 to 45 days when we're seeing that the winter road is open, and it is ending a lot earlier. You can normally count on that winter road to be open at least three months per year, and we're lucky now if we're getting 45 days a year. This is not something that just happened this year. We're seeing the pattern, over the years, that our winters are becoming shorter and shorter. Although I must say in jest that all of us in northern Ontario would appreciate a little bit of good weather every now and then, we recognize that this is a serious problem for our environment.

This bill is based on work that was done by Peter Tabuns, the current member for what used to be Riverdale, and work that was done by our former colleague Marilyn Churley, along with our federal leader, Jack Layton, that says we need to do something to deal with this particular issue. I want to go through some of the mechanics of the bill very quickly, and I know that my colleague and our critic for the environment, Mr. Tabuns, who knows a lot about this, is going to get an opportunity to speak to this as well.

What this bill says—and I certainly hope that the members of the assembly will support it—is that the province of Ontario needs to put a plan in place that sets us in the position of being able to meet the protocols negotiated under the Kyoto agreement. Under section 3, it says that if emissions were set at 1990 standards, by 2012 we need to meet what our commitments were under the Kyoto Protocol and that they have to be no less than 25% below their 1990 level by the year 2020. What that does is say to the government, "Put in place a plan. Develop a plan based on science, technology and everything

else. Call in the people that you need in order to develop a plan." Certainly, as New Democrats, we would want to participate in that. We have a number of ideas that my leader, Howard Hampton, talked about yesterday at a press conference in regard to some of the things that can be done, but ultimately the government would have to develop a plan that brings us to meeting those commitments.

The second thing it says is that the Environmental Commissioner will have the authority to look at what has been done to make sure that the government has met its commitments under this legislation. We need to have some sort of a watchdog. I think this is one of the key points. You can't just say, through an order in council, "We'll have the Ministry of the Environment go out and do this," and have no mechanism by which to determine if in fact we are meeting our goals set out in this legislation.

The other thing that it does is something that was raised in the press conference yesterday, and I just want to go back over it again. Some of the media were asking, "Isn't it kind of late? Can we meet our current targets by 2012?" I'll admit that it'll be somewhat difficult but not impossible. This government has had a chance for three and a half years to meet those commitments. They have not sent us down that path, in my estimation, to the degree needed.

What it does is it gives us the ability to go to 2016. Under subsection 3(3), we're saying, "If greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario are not reduced to the level required under clause (1)(a) by 2012, the executive council shall ensure that the emissions are reduced to that level by 2016..." It builds in a bit of a buffer to allow us to get there, recognizing that there may be some difficulty getting there. I think that if we're serious and we work hard, we're going to be able to meet those commitments. We can reduce those emissions by 50% with Nanticoke alone. If we were to do the kinds of things that we need to do to move people from cars into public transit, both intercity rail and in-city transit systems, I think we'd be able to do that.

That can be done in a number of ways. For example, the extension of the subway line that was announced previously in the budget is one way, but I think we need to not only look at that; we need to look at issues beyond just the subway. We need to take a look at what the TTC and other transit authorities across this province have to say about how they're able to move people off city streets and put them into the transit system. As we know, in Ontario, there's only one subway system, and that's the one in the city of Toronto. We need to take a look at light rail, we need to take a look at buses, we need to look at others.

The other part of all this is that we need to take a look at intercity transit. Clearly, GO Transit could play a huge role in pulling people off the 401 and the QEW, which would greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I think the proper type of coordination about how community transit systems interact with the GO system, from

Hamilton to Oshawa, to Niagara, Toronto and everything in between, and properly funding those transit authorities, such as GO Transit, in order to increase their services so that we can encourage people to get off the roads would go a long way toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

1110

I also want to say that section 5 of this bill allows the minister to deal with reducing greenhouse gases in a number of different ways. The bill gives the authority to the minister to regulate emissions limits and performance standards—something that was talked about yesterday in the press conference—and we would be using market-based mechanisms such as emission-trading offsets, something that has been talked about at the federal level. Also, we need to put in place the spending and fiscal measures—in other words, incentives—in order to move industry and move individuals toward strategies that would reduce greenhouse gases. I would argue that if we were to do things such as have been suggested by Howard Hampton, the leader of the New Democratic Party, and that is to really put in place incentives that allow individuals in their own homes to reduce the amount of energy utilized by better insulating their homes, by using technologies that allow us to reduce the amount of energy used, both natural gas and others, we would be able to reduce by a long shot the amount of greenhouse gases emitted into our planet.

In the couple of minutes I have left, I want to end on this point: I truly believe this is a non-partisan issue and I truly believe all members of this House are going to do the right thing here and allow this bill to go forward. We should not allow politics to get caught in the middle of this bill. This is a private member's bill. It's one that basically goes towards responding to an issue in our society that is quite serious. We owe it not only to ourselves today, but to future generations, to take this issue seriously and try to move forward by way of being able to develop strategies that do Ontario's bit towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

I call on members to support this bill so that we can move forward. We certainly want to work with whom-ever within government, industry and others to give suggestions on how a plan would be developed. But I want to say again that I'm not pretending for one second that I, as the author of the bill, or my party, as a political party, would dictate exactly what the plan should be. That's something that has to be developed in co-operation with the Ministry of the Environment and all others who can be brought into this debate, as far as what the plan should look like. This is a plan the government would have to develop in co-operation with others so that we can meet our commitments under the Kyoto Protocol.

Again I say—and I end on this note—that we owe it to not only today's generation but future generations to ensure that we do what we can in our contribution to making sure that we reduce greenhouse gas emissions, by cutting carbon emissions so that we can make this planet a safer place for all of us into the future.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Indeed, it's a pleasure for me to make some comments this morning on Bill 200.

I ran across something the other day that I thought was somewhat interesting. It was in a recent article of *Time* magazine, the Canadian edition. It said that "Svante Arrhenius was a little-known Swedish chemist who in the 1890s issued a remarkable warning: Keep pumping carbon dioxide"—CO₂—"into the air the way humanity has been doing since the dawn of the industrial age (around 1750), he said, and you can double the level of the heat-trapping gas in the atmosphere, raising temperatures dramatically." Those were his observations in the 1890s, the first person to start talking about the issue of climate change and greenhouse gases.

The current Premier has shown distinctive and dramatic leadership on this issue over many, many years. I want to go back to May 21, 2002, when the member from Ottawa South, Mr. McGuinty, asked to seek unanimous consent to move and pass the following motion without debate: "That the Ontario Legislative Assembly encourage our federal government to ratify the Kyoto agreement." Further in that statement he said, "If you are truly committed to doing something about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, then here are some of the things you could do in a positive and concrete way: you could get into the business of funding public transit in a real and meaningful way; you could encourage renewable electricity generation in Ontario; you could phase out our coal-fired hydro plants; you could begin to promote energy conservation in Ontario; you could begin to promote the use of renewable fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel. Those are all things you could do...." The member from Ottawa South, then the Leader of the Opposition and now the Premier of Ontario, has been a real leader when it comes to climate change and meeting the Kyoto commitments.

It's also interesting to look at the fact that we've been working with other partners over the last little while to look at this issue on a transnational basis, to come forward with a collective approach with others to solve the problem of climate change.

I'd like to get on the record this morning what Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger said just recently: "Ontario's announcement is terrific news. We know that the science is clear and political leaders everywhere have a responsibility to act decisively to combat global warming. But we also know that no state, province or country can do it alone. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is a global effort, and this interest from Ontario, along with California's agreements with the United Kingdom, western and northeastern states and others will continue to inspire other states, provinces and countries to join the fight against global warming."

Further to that, we have the new Governor of New York, Eliot Spitzer. We know him as New York's Attorney General who cleaned up Wall Street. This is what he had to say: "The harmful public health, environmental and economic impacts of global warming do not recog-

nize or respect international boundaries. Ontario and New York may be separated by a border, but we're united in a common cause to seek solutions to this most pressing challenge," that we have today, that being climate change.

There are some good elements in Bill 200, but from my perspective, there are a number of deficiencies. One of the things that I might have included in the bill would be the establishment of a permanent committee in this House to look at climate change. This issue, climate change, will transcend this Parliament, the next Parliament and the Parliament after that because climate change will bring about a fundamental change in Ontario's economy, and I think the establishment of a committee to look at that over the next period of time will be helpful to look at the kind of policies that we can shape collectively to achieve the goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to look at the climate change issue.

Secondly, I think there needs to be an amendment to the Education Act, particularly for grade 5 civics and grade 10 civics, an opportunity to put course curriculum in those two grade levels to look at climate change. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, the special edition that *Time* magazine had just recently on climate change outlined 51 steps, Mr. Speaker, that you and I could take every day in order to help to reduce the impact of climate change, those practical kinds of things that we could drive home in a grade 5 civics class, then again in a grade 10 civics class, to instill the notion of responsibility: that collectively, if we work together, we can make change—just as we did a decade or so ago in terms of instilling the notion of recycling in our young people.

The other issue when you look at this bill is that Ontario will have to take on more responsibility if other provinces fail to meet those targets. We know that the province of Alberta, through the oil sands development, is going to have some difficulty down the road meeting those targets. As I understand Bill 200, it would come back to Ontario to increase Ontario's effort beyond some established goals to take into account other provinces that won't achieve their goals.

I could keep going on for a while longer, but I know my other colleagues want to have an opportunity to talk on this very important measure this morning.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's interesting today that we're in the Legislature and we're joined by two school classes. I think this one is in grade 5, and this one looks about the same age. Would you be in grade 5 over there? Yes, they are. They're from grade 5 as well.

I think it's important that grade 5—that's 11 and 12 years old, I think. It's important to understand that what we do today for the environment—and I want the children, the kids, to understand this—will have very little effect until 50 years from now. You'll be 60 years old before there's a significant change in the environment if we start today and do something. If we don't start today and do something, then we'll be living in an environment that is very much like two cities I just visited, Beijing and Shanghai. Those are two very large cities in China. When

you visit Beijing, you find out that you only see the blue sky between eight and 15 days a year. All the rest of the time the air is so polluted that you can't see the blue sky. In fact, it's difficult to see a quarter of a mile. If you visit the Forbidden City, you cannot see from one side of the Forbidden City to the other because of the smog. It's in a constant state of upgrading. It needs constant painting because of the acid in the air that is eating away at the paint. That would be the future of our environment if we don't do something about the environment immediately.

1120

This is an interesting place. You came on an interesting day. Just a little while ago in the previous bill we heard an NDP member talk about cancelling the York subway program. Now, just 10 minutes ago, we heard a member talking about encouraging people to use more subways. You heard the speaker before me talk about the Premier and what a great environmental record he had, and I'm standing here and I'm going to say that the Premier has an absolutely terrible environmental record. He has done nothing to help encourage a cleaner environment for us today, for you in your future and for your children in your future. So this is a somewhat confusing place. We put all of our ideas out on the table, and hopefully out of all those we can get some synthesis that makes sense that we can go forward with.

In support of my contention that the Premier has not been a friend of the environment, I would quote no less an authority than the Environmental Commissioner, Mr. Gord Miller, who has been somewhat savage in his comments regarding this government's environmental record. That's an interesting point, because Mr. Miller was appointed when we were in government. This was prior to 2003. We sat over there, and we were the government. Mr. Miller was appointed, and the Liberals and the NDP were aghast that Mr. Miller would be appointed as Environmental Commissioner. Mr. Miller had very good credentials, and he was extremely well qualified for the job. When it came time to reappoint him, he had done such a good job that the Liberal government did indeed reappoint him. He continues to do, I think, an excellent job, especially when he savages the Liberal government for their record on the environment.

I want to say right off the top that I'm going to support this bill. I have some concerns about some of the elements within the bill. I think it needs some major amendments to change the direction, in some cases, of this bill. But any bill we pass in this House that affects the environment in a positive way I think is a good thing for Ontario, it's a particularly good thing for the youth of this province and it's a good thing for anybody who wants to live in a clean environment in this world.

There are many places in this world where that clean environment just doesn't exist, where they have turned their backs on the environment in order to pursue the economic activities that create those kinds of disasters that we see in cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Taipei and Formosa. Taiwan was another example. There's lots of pollution in and around Japan, which is very significant.

We were on a boat approaching Shanghai, and we were out in the Yellow Sea about 150 miles when the sea turned colour. It turned from that blue sea colour to a brown, and that brown was the effluent that was coming down the Yangtze River. That was 150 miles out into the sea, and from there on into Shanghai the water was absolutely polluted, no fish, no—

Mr. Bisson: It's silt.

Mr. Chudleigh: That's silt. Also, let me tell you, there was some pollution in it. You could see it. You could also smell it. It was a sad quote on the future, and that's what our future will look like if we don't do something very significant about the environment.

We talk about the Kyoto accord and the Kyoto Protocol. I have some significant reservations about the Kyoto accord, because the Kyoto accord allows a polluter, for instance, to go to a country that doesn't pollute and to buy pollution points. So you can go down to Uruguay, which has not a lot of industry, and you can buy from them pollution points because they're not polluting the air. You can buy their points and bring them back to Ontario, and then you can continue to pollute the Ontario air.

That system doesn't seem to have much of a global aspect to it. It doesn't take into consideration that the world is one and that we have to get together and fix this problem because it's a global problem. Simply shifting the pollution around the province or around the world doesn't solve the problem. That's one of the major concerns that I have with Kyoto.

I think that Kyoto is right-headed. It's aimed in the right direction in that it's a world body that has agreed that we have a problem. But there is one significant country, the United States of America, which has not signed on to Kyoto, and of course, there's a huge backlash and outcry about the United States not co-operating in this area. But after the first five years of Kyoto, when you measure the pollution that has taken place and how successful individual countries have been in controlling that pollution, the United States has been far more successful at controlling their pollution with their programs than Canada has been. So signing on to Kyoto or not signing on to Kyoto isn't the issue; it's how successful you've been and how far you want to go in providing the kind of support that it needs.

There's an interesting article today in the *Globe and Mail* written by Gary Mason. Gary Mason is out in BC. It's a real concern. One of the things that he says is: "The voices of doom have begun to drown out the thoughtful, rational discussion that needs to take place around solutions. We need to consider how we're going to get out of this mess while not plunging the world into economic chaos at the same time."

He goes on to quote Professor Howard, who has edited a book on Asia's environmental crises. He believes that the ideologues—those people with ideas and political agendas—have hijacked the climate-change debate; in other words, they've taken over the debate and have begun to channel it in the direction that they want to go.

People have a huge disconnect between the apocalyptic vision—the tsunamis, the hurricanes, the droughts, the disasters, those kinds of things that are befalling us—that some are predicting while at the same time being told that they can change the direction we’re going by changing the type of light bulb they use. There’s a disconnect between the world disasters and the proposed solutions.

I think we need that sane, rational voice to carry on with the job of getting that done. I don’t think that voice rests with the government. I don’t think Dalton McGuinty’s record is one that we can continue to have in Ontario. I think we need a thoughtful process to come up with a strong environmental approach to this problem and get that done at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): It’s a privilege to debate this bill in this House this morning. I want to say that my friend from Timmins–James Bay has talked about the impact of climate change on the north, and he has spoken about that quite eloquently. I want to thank him for bringing this bill forward today.

The essence of this bill is the need for action: action on a speedy basis; action that will actually make a difference to our climate, a difference to our economy, a difference to our society. That’s why this is before us today. The targets are ambitious, but I want to speak to the comments of the member for Peterborough before I go into the main body of my speech. If he has amendments to bring forward that are constructive, and the ones that he made were constructive, I suggest that the Liberal caucus vote for this bill and put it into committee, where it can be refined, just as the federal Clean Air Act was refined by the joint action of the NDP, the Bloc and the Liberals.

1130

One thing that he has misunderstood—and this needs to be understood by all those who are going to debate this bill—is that there is no section of this bill that requires Ontario to take on the commitments of any other province. It simply says that Ontario, in setting its goals, will use the same regime that Canada took on when it ratified the Kyoto Protocol. That’s a 6% reduction by 2012 and, where Ontario fails to meet its goals, it will take those goals and add a 30% penalty and work those through in the following three years. Because I know—we all know—that a great deal of time has passed and what we have now is a short window.

Time and its passage: In 1988, James Hansen from NASA testified before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Almost 20 years ago, he stood up and said, “Climate change is real. Climate change is happening. Climate change is reshaping the world around us and we need to act now.” That summer was the summer of heat waves and drought across North America. People understood that something was afoot because in fact the conditions they were looking at were record-breaking.

In Toronto, in the summer of 1988, there was a UN conference on climate change. The conclusions that were arrived at in that conference are known to all those who

deal with the issue, and that’s the statement that humanity is engaged in a large-scale, unplanned, unpredictable experiment with the world’s climate. And we depend on that climate to make sure that we have crops, to ensure that our bridges and roads are not washed away in floods, to ensure that there is stability in our lives. We are engaged in destabilizing that upon which we stand. That was 1988.

In 1992, the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro: At that point, the world committed to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. A very significant piece in that agreement was that no country would do anything that would bring about dangerous climate change. Then, for a number of years, very little happened. Countries went on as they had before. The convention was simply a statement.

It wasn’t until 1997 that an agreement was actually negotiated, with some detail—what we know as the Kyoto Protocol—to bring emissions down. Still, life went on and very little was done. In Canada, greenhouse gas emissions under Jean Chrétien continued to rise dramatically. Under Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien, tax breaks were given to the oil sands, the tar sands developments in Alberta, that caused a huge boom in oil extraction and a huge boom in emissions. Thus Canada was set on a trajectory of falling far outside any commitment that had been made.

In 2005, the Kyoto Protocol came into effect. Here we are in Ontario, with emissions continuing to climb. We’re not in a position to let those emissions continue to climb. In 2005, the Guardian in the UK reported very simply that “Rising sea levels, desertification and shrinking freshwater supplies will create up to 50 million environmental refugees by the end of the decade.” That’s substantial. That is tens of millions of people uprooted from their homes by drought and by flood. For the most part, those refugees will be in the developing world, not here. For many of us, they will be relatives or friends, people facing desperate situations. The world is starting to come to grips with that tide of environmental refugees, but the cost of that tide, the implications for world security and military conflict, have not yet sunk in.

Within the last year, the Stern report, produced by the government of the United Kingdom, noted that the impact of climate change this century would be equivalent, if unchecked, if not acted on, to a 20% reduction in world gross domestic product, comparable to the combined effects of World Wars I and II and the Great Depression. We all know that those were not great times for humanity. We know the conflict that came out of them and the human price that was paid, and we are in a situation where we actually have the ability to take action.

That’s why it’s important to have an act before us that says what the destination is that we have to reach to avoid the kinds of problems that Lord Stern outlined for the government of the United Kingdom. If we don’t take rapid action, if we let things go on as they are, if we take the very slow timelines that are now being adopted in the

United States, you can be very sure that our chances of stabilizing the world climate at a level that allows us to live the kinds of lives we want to live diminish substantially. Every year that goes by where we're not turning back the tide means that we will have to take much deeper cuts, much more expensive cuts, much more problematic cuts in the future.

This bill, as has been outlined by my colleague, says Ontario is going to take an ambitious approach to dealing with climate change. If it doesn't reach that approach, it will accept the Kyoto burden of adding 30% on to its goal, meeting that within three years of 2012, and that by 2020 we will go a further 25% below the 1990 levels. That's consistent with the European Union. The European Union has adopted the Kyoto Protocol. I think they've got 5% below 1990 but they've recently agreed to go 20% below 1990 by 2020, and if the rest of the world agrees, if the rest of the world is willing to take action, cut by 30%.

One of the things that has frustrated me about this debate—not here this morning, but the debate in the larger context—is the sense that on the one hand, people don't have a picture of the full scope of what's ahead of us, and I tried to outline that, but also that they often feel they're helpless. The simple reality is that our society has the technology, the legislative means, the resources, the wherewithal to make that move to sustainability, to actually make it a far more energy-efficient society, to phase out fossil fuels, to avoid the nuclear path and develop a society that can exist on the earth, can thrive on the earth without undermining the foundations of its well-being.

I want to speak very briefly about this whole question of nuclear power being the answer to climate change. Amory Lovins, who heads the Rocky Mountain Institute, is one of the foremost energy analysts in the world. He looks at this whole question of how humanity can afford to cut emissions and at the same time preserve its way of life. In doing the numbers analysis of nuclear power, he concludes that it is an extraordinarily expensive way to provide energy, far more expensive than conservation, far more expensive than micro power, using the heat that's thrown off when you have boilers in office buildings to make electricity—far more efficient and far cheaper than nuclear power and far faster to put in place.

This government is committed to spending about \$40 billion, \$45 billion on nuclear power and approximately another \$30 billion on the distribution facilities to carry all that power. We do not have the luxury of checking something out to see if it works and then saying, "Oh, we blew \$80 billion. Sorry, we can't afford to do this other stuff."

We made a decision about powering our society through fossil fuels. Frankly, the outcome of that is now apparent. We know that when you do something that's unsustainable, the by-products, the waste products, are going to have negative impacts. Let's not do the same with nuclear power and provide ourselves with waste products that no one wants anywhere near their community, near their riding.

1140

We have to keep in mind that as the world heats up, the physical conditions that we confront change. As the world heats up, the permafrost in the arctic regions of the world starts to melt, and the permafrost is holding millions of tonnes of methane, locked away for millennia, which will start to leak out into the atmosphere. As the world heats up, the world's soils will give up their carbon. As the world heats up, the forests we depend on will be dryer and more prone to fire. At some point we will have a situation where the release of greenhouse gases from natural processes exceeds the release of greenhouse gases from our energy systems. At that point, we face profound challenges to the stability of our economies and our societies.

No one knows where that tipping point is. No one really knows at what point you start getting those sorts of feedback that will make it very difficult for us to have any real impact on the changes that are coming about. We do know that in order to at least stabilize the world's climate, at least avoid some unpredictable impacts, the world should not warm more than two degrees centigrade higher than it was at the beginning of the pre-industrial period, and we've gone up about 0.6 in the last century. We have to do everything we can to keep under that red line.

The analogy that I'd just like to use in my last few moments is that of walking on a frozen lake. In January, after a week or two of minus 30 degrees, you can walk across a frozen lake in northern Ontario and it's a beautiful experience. The sky is blue, the air is crisp. Some people like it more than others, but it's quite spectacular, and you know that the ice underneath you is thick and it's safe. But as spring comes, this becomes a more and more perilous operation. The ice weakens unpredictably. Currents thin out the ice so that what you see as solid ice may simply be a thin skin on the surface. Increasingly, humanity is walking on that frozen lake as spring is coming and there are more and more thinning spots. Humanity is going forward; it doesn't know where those thin spots are. We have to do everything we can to avoid those spots, understand where they can be and do everything we can to arrest the process that is making that lake, that foundation that we walk on, that we survive on—we have to do everything we can to ensure that it doesn't break under our feet.

I call on all members of the Liberal caucus to support this bill. I call on them to bring it forward to committee and have it adopted by this Legislature. I believe that for the good of this province and this country we have to take that leadership.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): I really appreciate the opportunity again to speak about climate change and the environment. It's always difficult, in five minutes, to see what you're going to address, because the five minutes go by very quickly. It will be a difficult decision, at the end of this meeting, whether to vote against the bill or for the bill, because the ideas put forth by the third party are sound ideas, and they're ideas that we all buy into, but there are major flaws with this bill.

In 2001, with the city of Ottawa, I worked on the Better Buildings program. We had Chuck Wilson there, a great scientist, and we had people from industry, from government, from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. I was the councillor attached to the Better Buildings program. Chuck Wilson showed that we could freeze or at least limit our footprint with our buildings by doing a few things: building better buildings. I'm glad to see that our government has come that way. We will be going to the California standard for our new buildings and we'll be building great buildings that will have the least cost when you consider principal, interest and energy. At the same time, those buildings will be saving energy, lowering heating costs, decreasing smog and CO₂ and—the nice thing about it—at the same time creating more employment. So that's where we're going with our building code, which is very important because we are a northern nation. We have to go in and over a 20-year period make sure that our existing buildings are the best from an energy point of view. That's all good stuff.

I've been involved in this with a motion in 2004, and on September 26, 2006, I brought in Bill 139. Bill 139 had second reading, had full support. It's a bill which just names April 21, the day before Earth Day, as Climate Change Awareness Day. I have something going on in the high schools, a competition now. I find that young people are ahead of us, certainly ahead of politicians if you look worldwide, on where we should be going on the environment. The students are competing in a poster contest, and the best poster will be judged on April 21 at the 10 high schools involved. The kids are quite interested in it. The winner will win an iPod. The member for Timmins-James Bay, I think in your riding you do include some of the habitat for polar bears. So you'll be happy to hear that our awards for the kids who win the poster contest will be Polar Bear awards and it'll be small glass trophies. I'm sure that it will be meaningful to the kids and we're getting quite a bit of interest.

We have to look at where the talk this morning came from and some of the issues that the third party has with this. The leader of the third party is showing he's against Toronto, he's against the idea that we should have public transit that allows us to move. I'm just quoting: "We don't need another subway mega-project that might perhaps happen sometime four, five years or six years from now extending the subway line into a lightly populated York region." Sustainable transportation is so important, so how does this bill this morning measure up to that?

Our government is a green government. It supports Canada meeting our Kyoto targets. A \$200-million program will be coming forward. We should be waiting for that climate change plan. That is going to be a good plan, a plan that builds in Ontario.

The bill this morning does not protect Ontario in carrying a fair load as we move forward. Part of the bill, subsection 3(3), states that if Canada does not meet its Kyoto obligation by 2012, Ontario must further reduce its emissions due to the failure of other provinces to meet the national standard. This is a very difficult area to get

into. We do not want to take on the oil sands responsibilities of Kyoto. So I will be voting against the bill because it's a flawed bill, although there are very many good ideas in it.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm very pleased to join the debate on the Ontario Climate Change Act, 2007, which is intended to provide for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the province of Ontario.

Certainly we support the bill in principle, but we do take some exception to some of the specifics of this bill. We support, as this bill does put forward, the idea of clear targets which can be measured. We're pleased to see this bill here today in that it gives us an opportunity to discuss an issue which we know is one of the greatest challenges facing us, not just in this province but obviously throughout the world. We do believe in a very-well-thought-out, proactive plan to address climate change now, not later; however, we also believe that any good plan that is drafted must be drafted in consultation with the people in this province who are going to be impacted. But again, it allows the public to take a look at the bill. It allows for this bill to go to committee. It allows for public input. Certainly there are many amendments that need to be incorporated into a bill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this province.

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I think this bill also points out the lack of any action on the part of the McGuinty Liberals during their term in office. They have done absolutely nothing to address the issue of climate change after four long years in office, and I think this bill highlights the fact that there has been no action whatsoever. I can assure you that John Tory and a PC caucus would develop a plan of action. As I say, we agree with the establishment of clear targets and we would be prepared to compare our plan to the Liberal plan of inaction and lack of leadership at any time as we move forward.

I want to speak a little bit about the fact that in this plan that has been put forward by the member from Timmins-James Bay, and before him the member from Toronto-Danforth, they are proposing that they would achieve some of the greenhouse emission reductions by way of closing Nanticoke immediately and cancelling the York subway. Obviously we are concerned about that particular plan because, and I go back to what I said before, we believe that any plan—and we support the need for a plan, which has been lacking these past four years—must be done in consultation with all those who are going to be impacted. It needs to be realistic and it needs to clearly delineate how you can achieve these reductions. So we have a problem with the immediate closing of Nanticoke and obviously the cancelling of the York subway. We're also concerned because in this bill there is no mention made as to the cost of the plan. We believe there is a need for much more consultation, but at least we support the spirit of the bill and we appreciate the fact that it has been put before us.

If we take a look at the track record of this government, there were so many promises that were made in

regard to the environment and there were so many promises broken. In fact, the Environmental Commissioner, in his 2005-06 annual report entitled *Neglecting Our Obligations*, states that "there is no strategy for climate change..." and, "The ECO notes a distinct lack of leadership in the Ministry of the Environment. Although the ministry is supposed to lead other ministries in the coordination of Ontario's response to climate change"—it is shameful that there was no leadership.

They made a promise in their 2003 campaign. They said, "We will clean the air." We all know that in 2005 we had the worst year on record in terms of air quality. There were 15 smog advisories covering 53 days. They also said in 2003, "We think our most vulnerable citizens—seniors and children—should be able to go outside in summer without consulting a smog index." Well, 12 of the 15 advisories in 2005 occurred during the summer months. Then of course their most famous broken promise was, "We will shut down Ontario's coal-burning power plants by 2007 and replace them with cleaner sources."

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): This is a very important subject, Bill 200, An Act to provide for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario. I think this is a big, huge title. I hope the member from Timmins-James Bay will be able to convince his leader, Howard Hampton, who is against the subway to York region because he thinks there is not enough population living in that area. It would help our province and our city of Toronto a lot to minimize greenhouse gases and also the emissions that go into the air, to reduce the number of cars driving on the road.

The second thing is, I was puzzled when I heard the leader of the third party, Mr. Hampton, is against closing the coal generation in the north, and is with it in the south. What a contradiction.

The member for Timmins-James Bay is trying to exclude the forestry industry from that bill. I hope he consulted the member for Toronto-Danforth before introducing this bill, because there is a lot of confusion.

Also, he has recommended a cap-and-trade system in, I think, subclauses 5(1)(a)(i) and (ii).

I wonder what confusion is going on in that party? Why not—before he tried to convince us as a whole in this House—convince his party in terms of one direction, one ideology and one system? Because it is very important for all of us.

As a province, as a Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and as a caucus on this side of the House, we've been working very hard. It is a very important issue for us. We introduced a lot of measures to minimize the emissions in the province: by giving \$2,000 support for people who buy hybrid cars; introducing ethanol; creating a system to persuade many different companies and factories to produce hydro from windmill and solar systems and bi-methane—all these initiatives in order to minimize the emissions in Ontario—and also our conservation initiatives which help to minimize emissions in the province.

All of these initiatives fit in the same direction, and I hope the member for Timmins-James Bay will be able to

convince his party to come forward and support our initiatives, working together to minimize the greenhouse emissions in the province of Ontario. It is our duty as citizens of this land; we are the stewards of this land. We should protect that land, protect it for future generations.

Despite all of this talk from the Conservative Party—I listened to Mr. Chudleigh from Halton region, and he is talking about supporting the Kyoto accord; in the past he's against it—we should be a part of that globalization system, because if we reduce the emissions in Ontario, it doesn't mean it's going to help the environment across the border.

Our Premier has been working very hard alongside the Minister of the Environment to consult with the states around the province of Ontario, like Michigan and New York state, to work together in order to help the region to minimize the greenhouse emissions, because it is very important, not just for us at the present time but also for future generations.

Our duty, as I mentioned, as a government, as a province and as a people who are in charge as stewards of this land, is to protect it, not for a year or two or 10, but forever. I'm proud to be part of the government. We are taking the right initiatives, and I hope the member for Timmins-James Bay—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Bisson, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bisson: I want to thank all of those members who participated in this debate. I heard some support. The question will be just how much support we have.

I remind members that this is an issue that is affecting not only the people in this province but across this world, and we need to do our bit in Ontario in order to be able to deal with reducing emissions of carbon into the atmosphere. We all know far too well how difficult it is to live on a planet as polluted as this, and where it will be.

I do want to say to members and I want to make it clear: Bill 200, if people take the time to read it, doesn't purport to tell you what to do as far as the plan. What this bill says is that there will be a plan drawn up by the Ministry of the Environment. That plan will be drawn up by them and other experts who are involved in the field. Certainly we as New Democrats would like to participate in giving suggestions about what would be in the plan, but in the end it will be up to the cabinet, it will be up to the ministry, to decide what's in the plan. This bill does not tell the government what's in the plan. What it does is say, "Here's the process you'll have to follow to develop a plan." That's the first issue.

The second issue I want to speak to in regard to this particular bill—and I would just end on this point—is that we have very little time to act. I think Mr. Tabuns, our critic for the Ministry of the Environment, was very clear: Our planet, more and more so, is being affected, and the issues are starting to compound themselves in regard to emissions that are going into our atmosphere. If we don't take action, all of us individually, all of us collectively and all of us as provinces and nations, to do something about doing our bit to reduce greenhouse gases, this planet will be in a much worse state. I would

argue that Ontario needs to do its bit, and this bill, introduced by myself but originally conceived by my colleague the environment critic for the NDP, Mr. Tabuns, and supported by New Democrats, helps to get us along that way. I call on members to vote in favour of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

LABOUR RELATIONS
AMENDMENT ACT
(REPLACEMENT WORKERS), 2007
LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL
(TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall first deal with ballot item number 77 standing in the name of Mr. Kormos.

Mr. Kormos has moved second reading of Bill 192. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members for a vote.

ONTARIO CLIMATE CHANGE ACT, 2007
LOI DE 2007 SUR LES CHANGEMENTS
CLIMATIQUES EN ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 78 standing in the name of Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Bisson has moved second reading of Bill 200. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay".

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

LABOUR RELATIONS
AMENDMENT ACT
(REPLACEMENT WORKERS), 2007
LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL
(TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Kormos has moved second reading of Bill 192. All those in favour, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Dhillon, Vic
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea

Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kormos, Peter
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Martel, Shelley
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted

McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Patten, Richard
Ramal, Khalil
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Tabuns, Peter
Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand to be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas

Chudleigh, Ted
Kwinter, Monte

Qaadri, Shafiq
Smitherman, George

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 27; the nays are 6.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I request that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Kormos has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government. Agreed? Agreed.

ONTARIO CLIMATE CHANGE ACT, 2007
LOI DE 2007 SUR LES CHANGEMENTS
CLIMATIQUES EN ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Now we will deal with some unfinished business. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I would ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on justice policy.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Bisson has asked that Bill 200 be referred to the standing committee on justice policy. Agreed? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO LOTTERY
AND GAMING CORP.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): As of yesterday, 120 questions have been asked and zero answers have been given regarding the involvement of the Premier, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and members of their staff regarding the OLG debacle. My constituents have asked me questions using phrases like, "Why is the government avoiding answering questions?" and words such as "contradiction," "blame game," "hiding the truth," "dishonest," "can't be trusted," "arrogant," "shameful," "avoidance."

I find that through the entire questioning on this matter, members of this House and the people of Ontario have yet to hear the truth. The minister has hidden behind the Ombudsman and the OPP investigation. It is further disappointing that the Premier and the minister want to continually look back to previous governments to lay blame. In almost four years of this government, it has done nothing but assemble their campaign strategists and

other spin doctors to create a story rather than just tell the truth. Where there is smoke, there is fire, and there is a lot of smoke.

I call on the Premier and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal responsible for lotteries to open their offices to an investigation and a review by a legislative committee so that a forensic audit can be done, so that the people of Ontario can know the truth on this matter. We ask that the Premier and the minister begin to show leadership and do the right thing.

SCHOOL BUS ACCIDENT

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): It's with a heavy heart that I make this statement today. Yesterday in my riding of Mississauga East, a young boy was involved in a very serious accident on Highway 410. The school bus he was riding on was taking the students of St. Alfred Catholic School in Mississauga on a field trip. Sadly, 10-year-old John Pham died late this morning in the Hospital for Sick Children. This is a terrible tragedy that touches so many, including parents and teachers across the province and the country. Our hearts and prayers go out to John's family.

Twenty-seven other children and four adults were also on the bus. Fourteen of those 27 children and at least one of the adults were sent to hospital.

I have visited St. Alfred school and other schools in my riding on numerous occasions. Many St. Alfred Catholic School students have recently been guests of Queen's Park on a school tour. The children at St. Alfred have always been an enthusiastic group. I have called the school and spoken with Principal Julie Command-Tollis to offer my support.

On behalf of all Mississauga residents and the members of this chamber, I'd like to offer our prayers and condolences to the Pham family and all the children involved in the accident.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I rise today to make all members aware of an important day for this Legislature that is fast approaching.

On Monday, the leader of the official opposition will rise to debate a most important motion. The motion will ask the Legislature to endorse its desire for the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly to hold an inquiry into what has become known as Lottogate. The motion calls for an investigation into the flow of information between the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., the Minister and Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the Premier's office regarding the issues of fraud and other irregularities within Ontario's provincial lottery system, including documentary and viva voce evidence.

The motion is very important as it will determine once and for all whether or not this government and its

members believe in the very issues they ran on in the last election, such as empowering the Legislature and its MPPs, governing with honesty and integrity, respecting the traditions of the Legislature—that was a good one—and operating an open and transparent government—another good one.

On Monday, members of this Legislature have a choice: Vote in favour of this motion so Ontarians can find out the answers to the questions the Premier and members of his cabinet refuse to answer during question period, or vote against it, furthering encouraging the cynicism Ontarians have towards politicians and government.

The choice is clear. I encourage all members to carefully consider over the weekend how they're going to vote on this bill, on this motion, and return to the Legislature on Monday to vote their conscience.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Current CCAC policy regarding in-home nursing for medical injections must be changed.

Right now, the CCAC will only let a nurse administer an injection to a client if the client can't be transported to a doctor's office or an after-hours clinic without their condition worsening or if the client or the primary care giver can't be taught to administer the needle himself or herself.

Our constituent, 60-year-old Ghislaine Desrochers, was released from hospital and was told a nurse from the CCAC would teach her how to inject herself twice weekly with two medications. She objected, as her medical condition made this impossible. Her husband objected, as he feared hurting her, poking around with needles. She was then told she would have to go to her doctor or after-hours clinic twice weekly for these injections. The CCAC only changed its position because the family doctor was away for several weeks and couldn't administer anything, and a review of the file showed that a nurse was already coming in to provide other health care and so could administer injections at the same time.

This policy wastes a doctor's valuable time when a nurse is perfectly qualified to do the job. It costs the health care system more if you don't have a family doctor and have to go to an after-hours clinic for needles. It's unrealistic to tell a 66-year-old son that he has to inject his 87-year-old mother with her medication, another case we've had to deal with. If CCAC clients need injections, then nurses should do this at their homes. Patients and caregivers have enough to deal with without worrying that they're going to hurt themselves or their loved ones with needles.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): It's my pleasure to rise today to offer my congratulations on behalf of myself, and I'm sure the members of this House and the entire

McGuinty government, to my constituents Betty Farr and Jason Richardson, who are medal-winning Special Olympians.

Mr. Richardson and Ms. Farr are currently training vigorously in preparation for the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games that are being held in Shanghai this October. I would particularly like to take this opportunity to highlight the accomplishments made by these two great athletes during the Special Olympics summer games of 2006. Mr. Richardson and Ms. Farr literally dominated the power lifting portion of the competition.

Ms. Farr, who is the first female Special Olympian to take up power lifting in Brantford, set a new record by dead lifting an incredible 130.5 kilograms. For those of us who are metrically challenged, that's 287 pounds. That's incredible. Ms. Farr was not done there, however. She won another gold medal in the squat and a silver medal in the bench press.

Mr. Richardson was also successful, as he won a gold medal in the bench press, a dead lift and the squat: a triple gold medal winner—simply amazing.

On behalf of myself, and all the members of this House, I might add, I offer and we offer our congratulations to both athletes on their remarkable accomplishments to date and wish them good luck during the competition in China this coming October. Thank you very much. Bring home the gold, guys.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): In 1973, the fundamental question in the Watergate scandal in the United States asked by Senator Howard Baker of Tennessee was, what did the President know and when did he know it? When the truth came out after a Senate committee investigation, the President of the United States resigned.

Here we are, more than 30 years after the Watergate scandal, and the McGuinty Liberal government hasn't learned a thing. Today, the fundamental question in the Lottogate scandal is, what did the minister know and when did he know it?

For the past three weeks our party has been asking this question. In fact we've raised it, and questions stemming from it, 121 times. We've received not one straight answer from the Premier or any of his ministers. Instead, they are hiding behind the Ombudsman's report by claiming they will adopt his recommendations. What they don't acknowledge is that the Ombudsman is highly critical of the way the government has managed our lotteries, which may have led to thousands of Ontarians having their winnings stolen.

I recall during my first term here in the early 1990s the Ontario Liberal caucus, then in opposition, insisting on committee hearings when an NDP minister was accused of inappropriate conduct. They demanded hearings and they participated in those hearings with enthusiasm and zeal. Now in government, 15 years later, they would seek

to deny the opposition that same opportunity to seek the truth. What have they got to hide?

There's an old adage that those who don't learn from the mistakes of history are doomed to repeat them. What did the minister know and when did he know it? The only way the public trust will be restored is to answer this question through a legislative inquiry.

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CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to share with my colleagues a letter that appeared in yesterday's Peterborough This Week newspaper. The letter was written by Mr. Mark Walsh, president of Kinark Child and Family Services, and I quote:

"Ontario's children and youth will benefit from the \$24.5 million in additional funding earmarked for children's mental health that was announced by Minister Mary Anne Chambers earlier this week.

"These additional funds are welcomed with open arms by the children's mental health sector. Through this announcement, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the current government have displayed a commitment to helping Ontario's youth and a determination to tackle the mental health issues facing this province's young people.

"This announcement will not immediately eliminate wait lists and provide each child in the province with the same opportunity to live a quality life, but it is progress and will help agencies provide more service to children and youth who have been waiting for months.

"This funding will move the cause of children's mental health forward and hopefully lay the foundation for future increased funding announcements in order to catch up and meet the mental health needs of Ontario's children and youth.

"Kinark Child and Family Services"—of Peterborough—"applaud Minister Chambers and the government for listening to the sector's call for action."

YORK SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I rise in the House today to speak about the McGuinty government's commitment to the subway extension from Toronto to the city of Vaughan, which is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Ontario. This extension will reduce gridlock, enhance the York region economy and provide more efficient transportation for students traveling to York University. It will also create thousands of good jobs in the construction industry. This is a positive step in providing better transit options to those living in York region, the fastest-growing regional municipality in Ontario.

The NDP thinks that York region residents and students of York University do not deserve to have efficient transit that connects them to downtown Toronto. The McGuinty Liberals, on the other hand, believe that this is

a necessary step to keeping the two areas connected and to keeping emissions from cars down. The McGuinty Liberal government is building a successful, green, sustainable economy while the leader of the third party has once again demonstrated that the NDP are stuck in the past without a clear workable environmental plan.

While the third party voted against subway expansions and giving an alternative to those stuck in gridlock, the McGuinty government recognizes the need to improve air quality through reducing vehicle use and improving public transit. The McGuinty Liberals are moving forward with their commitment to tackling climate change, and the NDP continues to delay progress, play politics and destroy—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Members' statements?

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I rise today to talk about a very important issue for Toronto, York region and the GTA, which is the expansion of the York subway line.

The McGuinty Liberals have committed funding to the people of the GTA for the York subway expansion because we know that it will play a vital role in helping to lessen the problems associated with gridlock, help commuters, students and others to get to where they need to go quicker, and help fight climate change, something very important to all of us.

At a press conference yesterday, the leader of the third party suggested that we didn't need the York subway expansion. I want to state for the record that this is not the case. It is a betrayal of public transit and the people of Toronto and York region to say so. Why the NDP would want to deny commuters, students and all those who would rely on this vital service to have more access to transportation and to lessen the amount of cars on the road is absolutely inexplicable.

Given the NDP's lack of support for the subway and the discussion earlier today at Toronto city hall, I want to quote the mayor. He said, "That link is a critical transportation link in Toronto because it links downtown to the 905 and creates a new transportation hub in Vaughan. We should be city building. These links should have been done years ago." Those words came from the mayor of Toronto, March 24, 2006.

It's time the leader of the third party took some responsibility for his comments and answered the question that—

The Speaker: Thank you.

VISITORS

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound—Muskoka): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like all of us here to welcome the parents of Calla Pfrimmer, who's been doing an excellent job as a page from Huntsville, Ontario. Pat and Brian Pfrimmer are down for the day and they're in the members' west gallery.

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Over the last couple of days you've made comment on some of the language that's being used in the House, and again I think I heard it today where accusations of misrepresentation and untruths are being made again. I didn't want to interrupt the statements, but I want to ask you if it's still appropriate in this place for those types of things to be said, whether or not the intent was somebody else said it and then it was read by somebody else that said it. I'd like your ruling on that so that we can get this place back to the spot where you have asked us to be.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To that point of order, Speaker: As the NDP House leader, I appreciate the comments made by the member. I agree with him that the member's statements by his Liberal colleagues were entirely inappropriate, inaccurate, non-factual, and his courage in criticizing his own colleagues is to be lauded.

Mr. Levac: On that same point of order, Speaker: I do appreciate the member for Niagara Centre's interjection on this, but what we're looking for is actually a ruling on whether or not anyone in this House is allowed to read a statement made by somebody outside of the House into the record when it's against what you've been trying to tell us to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): All members would know that in this place we need to practise the civility that we would practise outside of this place and that although some words and some phrases may in fact be found to be technically parliamentary, we should exercise that kind of good judgment that would exist in the general population. I've been urging members to do that. Thank you for the point of order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SAFER ROADS FOR A SAFER ONTARIO ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 VISANT À CRÉER DES ROUTES PLUS SÉCURITAIRES POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS SÛR

Mrs. Cansfield moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 203, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 203, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi de 2001 sur les recours pour crime organisé et autres activités illégales et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister may wish to make a brief statement.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I'll make a statement during ministerial statements.

REMEMBRANCE DAY
OBSERVANCE ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'OBSERVATION
DU JOUR DU SOUVENIR

Mr. Tascona moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 204, An Act respecting the observance of Remembrance Day and to make related amendments and repeals to other Acts / Projet de loi 204, Loi concernant l'observation du jour du Souvenir et modifiant ou abrogeant d'autres lois connexes.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.
The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): This bill provides for the observance of two minutes' silence on November 11 of each year and for making November 11 a statutory holiday and amending the Employment Standards Act.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

ROAD SAFETY

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I rise in the House today to introduce important legislation that would save lives on Ontario's roads.

Since our government took office nearly four years ago, we have worked tirelessly with our road safety partners to improve safety on Ontario's roads, yet more than two people are killed and 10 seriously injured every day on our roads. Children lose their parents, wives lose their husbands and people lose their closest friends. We cannot allow this to continue, so we are taking action to save lives and to prevent injury.

Our government's proposed legislation would set a new standard for road safety, with tougher sanctions to target drinking and driving, aggressive and dangerous driving behaviours. If passed, this legislation would also help protect police officers in the line of duty.

With this legislation, we are proposing to further protect Ontarians from drinking drivers. Anyone caught driving with a blood alcohol concentration of .05 would face tougher penalties than ever, and they would get stiffer for repeat incidents. First-time roadside driver's licence suspensions would range from three days for a first reading of between .05 and .08 blood alcohol concentration, to seven days for a second infraction and 30 days for a third or subsequent incident. The second time someone is caught, they'll have to complete an education program, and if they're caught again, they'll have

to install an ignition interlock device in their vehicle for six months. And, if this legislation is passed, repeat drunk drivers will finally face the real possibility of having their cars seized by the courts.

We're also going to make our roads safer by cracking down on street racers who choose to race on Ontario's roads. Since 1999, there have been 35 street-racing-related deaths in Ontario, and innocent bystanders are often the victims of these senseless acts. This legislation, if passed, would give law enforcement the power to suspend the licences and impound the vehicles of drivers involved in street racing and stunt driving. This legislation would give police the power to issue an immediate roadside seven-day licence suspension and a seven-day vehicle impoundment for street racing or participating in a driving contest or in stunt driving. It would also increase the minimum fine from \$200 to \$2,000, and it would increase the maximum fine from \$1,000 to \$10,000. This would make our street racing fines the highest in Canada.

We're serious about protecting the men and women who help keep Ontario safe. It's sobering to consider that more police officers are killed at roadside than during any other activity. We've asked the law enforcement community what they feel we could do to help improve their safety while on the job. We've heard their comments, which is why we're proposing to allow police vehicles to display flashing blue lights, in addition to the red lights they already use. This change may seem small, but it will improve a police vehicle's visibility, and that is critical to the officers' safety, especially at night. It's the least that we can do to help keep police safe while they're helping to protect us and keep us safe.

Injury prevention is a key driving force behind this legislation. Motor vehicle collisions cost Ontarians \$9.1 billion annually in social and health care costs.

With this proposed legislation, the McGuinty government is delivering on its commitment to ensure that Ontario builds upon its successful record as a leader in road safety by keeping our communities and families safe.

I call upon all members of this Legislature to join me in supporting this life-saving road safety legislation.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Today I rise to share an important accomplishment with the House. It falls upon the commitment to strengthen Ontario's rural communities in the 2007 Ontario budget, which was delivered on March 22 by our colleague the Honourable Greg Sorbara, Ontario's Minister of Finance.

Through the budget, our government is investing \$140 million out of the rural infrastructure investment initiative. That's part of our ongoing commitment to help rural and small communities in this province provide safe and reliable local infrastructure.

This one-time \$140-million investment doubles the funds initially committed to the rural infrastructure in-

vestment initiative when this program was first launched in September 2006. It is a significant enhancement to their \$185-million commitment to assist farmers and rural communities announced by Premier McGuinty at that time. Ontario's small and rural municipalities have told us that they need stronger local infrastructure, including safer bridges and roads, dependable water and waste water systems, better solid waste management processes, improved sports, recreational and cultural facilities and reliable community energy systems. We have responded to the need through this new investment.

These new funds will foster economic growth and promote a higher quality of living for the people in these communities, indeed all across Ontario. In fact, today I was in the village of Winchester with our colleague for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, MPP Jim Brownell, to participate in an event announcing a grant of more than \$738,000 to help this community. Local officials there told me that these funds will be used to revitalize 100 Club Park, the largest recreation area in the entire township.

Indeed, 190 communities right across Ontario received a share of this \$140-million investment. Communities applied for this funding, and their applications were evaluated against a set of criteria established to ensure that projects meet Ontario's priority needs and have a positive economic and social impact on our local economy.

Our government is allocating this funding now to address infrastructure needs so that municipalities can move forward in the 2007 construction season. Our government has made strategic choices to sustain and stimulate public infrastructure in Ontario. To this end, the \$140-million rural infrastructure investment initiative builds on ReNew Ontario, our government's \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan, one of the largest such investments in more than a generation. By doubling our original commitment to \$140 million, we are further demonstrating our support for Ontario families living in rural and small communities.

As Ontario's Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, I am indeed very proud to share this announcement with the House here today, and I'm very proud of what this investment will mean in improving the quality of life of Ontarians who live in small and rural communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Statements by the ministry? Responses?

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I want to respond to the announcement by the Minister of Transportation, bringing in what I consider to be a very important bill. I want to commend her and the government for bringing this legislation forward.

This morning was indeed an historical event in this province, no doubt the first time, and perhaps the last, that a Liberal Premier acknowledges the work of a Pro-

gressive Conservative member of this Legislature for work done on behalf of a file and in helping to shape government policy.

I trust we'll have the opportunity to improve this bill through committee. We have some amendments we would like to propose that I believe will further strengthen this legislation. What is missing from this bill is the reference to aftermarket parts that I believe should be considered, specifically the proposal to clearly define nitrous oxide ignition systems within cars to ensure that they cannot be triggered from the driver or passenger side. We don't want in any way to interfere with recreational racing, but we do want to make sure there is no chance of anyone interfering with their car by enhancing the power of the engine through these aftermarket parts.

I look forward to participating in the committee process. I want to say again to the government that I appreciate your initiative in bringing this forward. I trust that we'll see speedy passage of this bill—certainly the official opposition will work co-operatively with the government to that end—and we trust that the government will be as responsive as well to some of our recommendations that we'll have in committee to improve the bill.

1400

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to respond to my colleague the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Before I address his remarks, to the Minister of Transportation, I appreciate her efforts on behalf of the Grimsby MTO office. She was kind enough to indicate that she's seen my letter and is working on the issue, so I appreciate that. Hopefully we'll get that issue resolved momentarily.

I'd say to my colleague the minister that with all due respect, this does seem to be a bit of a conversion on the road to electoral defeat; we suddenly see a small amount of funds being allocated to rural Ontario. In many senses, we very well know that to Dalton McGuinty, the counties between Toronto and Ottawa are the flyover counties he sees from his airplane as he flies back and forth. They don't register on his radar screen. In fact, there are a number of rural members here in the assembly—and I share their concerns—who were passed over, over and over again, for cabinet positions. In fact, a cabinet position was most recently given to an MPP who had only been in office for three days, passing up many veterans. No wonder we've seen a couple of long-time veterans from eastern Ontario who have decided to retire rather than try to defend the awful Dalton McGuinty record when it comes to supporting rural Ontario.

We saw again most recently in the budget the Ministry of Agriculture cut. It's supposed to be a lead ministry, so called in the McGuinty government. It's now cut once again in the most recent budget. The Ministry of Natural Resources likewise has been cut, another important ministry to rural Ontario. We all remember the Move Ontario program a year and a half ago that basically told people

in rural Ontario that they had best move into the big cities if they want to receive any funding from that capital project. I know my colleague the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has a private member's bill before this assembly to allocate the gas tax to rural municipalities as well, to our public transit, roads and bridges. That is opposed by this minister and opposed by the Dalton McGuinty government. We wanted to see real action on infrastructure in rural Ontario—to you, the minister—supporting that bill instead of these last-minute promises. It's no coincidence that the minister is in Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. We have an outstanding candidate in Chris Savard in that riding. I know they're worried about Chris Savard winning that next election.

Do you know what? When you see Domtar close, 1,000 jobs, when you see Cascades close in that area, when you see United Tri-Tech Corp. close and in a nearby community Hershey's and Nestlé closing down, these last-minute promises are cold comfort to rural Ontario, which has become the poster child for the flight of manufacturing jobs—125,000 manufacturing jobs gone—in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I respond to the Minister of Transportation, and I can tell you that the New Democrats look forward to seeing the legislation she tabled and that received first reading in this Legislature today. We think it's incredibly important to address these issues in the interests of public safety and safer highways. Indeed it is one of those pieces of legislation that clearly has to go through the committee process. As Mr. Klees, on behalf of his caucus, indicated, there are elements that have been addressed, amongst other things, in the Klees bill itself that may well strengthen this piece of legislation and make it far more effective.

One of the issues of course is that people who street race do so clandestinely. They don't do it in such a way that they design the event to be caught. The whole issue, then, is, how do you catch street racers? How do you identify people who are en route to or from a street race?

This raises a somewhat broader issue, and that is the need for a thoughtful, although expedient, legislative process. That's why I wrote to the government House leader today further to the House leaders' meeting this morning. In my letter to the government House leader, I reiterate that there are clearly several government bills that are to be the subject matter of public hearings. I further repeat the NDP proposal that the House rise for two weeks so that public hearings can be held, with travel as necessary. We can then return and complete the government's business to the extent that the government wishes. New Democrats are prepared to sit into the months of June and July, as necessary, to properly deal with the bills that the government wants to move forward.

This bill that has been tabled today by the Minister of Transportation, being one of a number of bills now that

has to be submitted to public hearings, would be ideal for a two- or three-week hiatus—which New Democrats are making quite clear that we will agree to—so that committees can travel across the province, come back and we can then sit. As I say, we're prepared to sit into the months of June and July, as necessary, to the extent that this government wants to pursue its agenda.

I trust that this bill is a priority of the government. If that's the case, let's get to work on it, including adequate committee consideration.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I want to rise today on behalf of the New Democratic Party to respond to the announcement in regard to infrastructure investments in Ontario. I've got to say that it was very clear: The minister said that this was a "strategic" decision. I say, yes, it was a strategic decision—to have one-time funding in an election year in order to get some photo ops to help some of your members maybe get elected. That's the word "strategic."

There's no long-term funding here to respond to the needs of communities. You know as well as I do, because I and every other member in this House who represents rural communities and medium communities has said it to you, that the current COMRIF program does not work. It is a program that basically pits one community against the other, pits council members against each other at the council table and doesn't allow municipalities to do the kind of strategic planning that needs to be done in order to assist them with their funding as far as infrastructure needs go.

All this is is a pre-election announcement. This announcement says that they will increase the money attributable to the COMRIF program by \$70 million, doubling it. Good for the extra money, but we all know what this is. This is about assisting the government and having a few more photo ops in an election year. Guess what? If they were to be elected—and I'm not sure they would be elected as a government in the next Parliament—they will forget after the election the needs of communities across Ontario to fund infrastructure.

Let me remind you of some. You would know the community LSB, the local services board, in Moose Factory, Moccreebec, has had an application before your ministry for some four years now to fix ruptured water mains that are causing so much trouble that they have to turn the water system off at night in order to recharge the system so water is available during the day. If there was a tragic fire, you couldn't even hook the fire trucks up to the hydrants because that system doesn't work. Why is it they're not getting money? Because the COMRIF program that you talk about in this particular statement today doesn't respond to the needs of the community.

There is far less money available to far too many communities to be able to fund their capital needs across this province. I say we need stable and predictable capital funding for municipalities so that municipal councils

from Hamilton to Timmins to Kenora to Cornwall are able to do the kind of planning that they've got to do in order to be able to assist with funding capital needs in their communities. All this is is yet another Dalton McGuinty photo op.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier concerning the lottery scandal. We've asked 121 questions so far without an answer from the government with respect to what they knew and when they knew it.

We have filed a motion to get this matter into a legislative committee for a quick, open and transparent inquiry into this scandal, something that has been a precedent a number of times before. Specifically, we've suggested that the committee should look into the flow of information involving the Premier's office, the minister's office and the lottery corporation, questions which were not investigated by the Ombudsman and which are not being investigated by the police but which need to be answered, especially given the contradictions that we've seen coming out of the government as to what happened and when. Every day that you refuse to answer questions, for every day that you refuse to refer this to a committee or some other kind of independent investigation, the odour of a cover-up grows stronger. What do you have to hide, and why won't you refer this matter to a committee for an open investigation?

1410

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I think that surely if there's one individual who is beyond reproach in terms of how he has addressed this matter, it must be the Ombudsman, and there must be unanimous agreement in this House in that regard, I would suggest.

The Ombudsman spoke to this issue again yesterday. I'm sure the leader of the official opposition will want to hear what he said when he, an independent, outside person, spoke to this same issue again. He said, "These are radical changes"—in reference to the changes that he has proposed—"and I'm happy with the government's response."

I think that's an important opinion, to be weighed carefully by the people of Ontario. I think they remain very much focused on the activities that we are undertaking in order to ensure that they can have confidence in their lottery system. We received some very specific recommendations. We are acting on those very recommendations.

Mr. Tory: Of course the Ombudsman is referring to the activities that were undertaken after the government got caught and after the lottery corporation got caught.

What we're looking for here is: How many people got ripped off? How long did this thing go on after you knew about it and did nothing, and in fact may have done worse than nothing, which was to try to cover it up? People want to know how an e-mail could have gone into the minister's office more than a year ago and the minister could do nothing. The fact is, that explanation is simply not credible, that an e-mail would have gone a year ago and that the minister did nothing. They want to know why your most intimate Liberal insiders, not the people running the corporation, your Liberal insiders—your campaign manager and others, your top spin doctors—are the ones trying to concoct the stories to get out of this, not trying to fix the problem.

As Ian Urquhart wrote in the *Toronto Star*, "There are still unanswered questions surrounding when the government first learned of the problem and what it did about it. Such questions were not the purview of the Ombudsman's inquiry, nor are they the subject of the OPP probe." That's why we need a committee hearing. Why won't you approve it? What are you hiding?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: One of the things that the Ombudsman continues to raise is the whole notion of the need for a change in the corporate culture. He specifically raises that in his report. He specifically references the minister's response to that, and he says, "Most importantly, Minister Caplan commented that he has taken to heart our findings regarding the need to change the corporate culture at the OLG."

Mr. Gough, who was unanimously supported in terms of his responsibilities there, says, "We acknowledge the important insights you offered on our corporate culture. Your report provides the focused agenda needed to help drive positive cultural change."

Just recently, of course, Mr. Brown is no longer there. There is a new acting CEO, Michelle DiEmanuele, who has much experience when it comes to bringing about change in the corporate culture.

I think what Ontarians want to see is that we're moving forward in terms of protecting them at the retail level and at the same time making efforts to change the corporate culture, and we're doing all those things.

Mr. Tory: The Premier loves to read his quotes, and of course he never reads this one from the Ombudsman at page 5: "There are disturbing signs the culture that led to the difficulties in the first place is not gone. It was not conscience or self-criticism that smartened the OLG up. It was a public relations nightmare played out on the public airwaves despite its best efforts at suppression. A profound cultural shift has yet to occur." That's what he said on page 5.

The stonewalling, the spinning and the cover-up shows a contempt for this House and its members. Just yesterday, we hear the Deputy Premier saying that people are playing the lottery in record numbers, and yet we see in the paper this morning that sales have been soft the past few months on Wednesdays.

It's that kind of behaviour, always trying to spin your way out of this, that shows why we need a committee

inquiry. Your 2003 election platform said you would give more power to backbenchers and more power to committees. If you meant a word of that, will you keep your promises and decide to refer this lottery fiasco to a committee for an independent examination? What are you hiding? What are you hiding? Call the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I wish to remind members that it's necessary, when we're placing questions or answering them, to speak in the third person and speak through the Speaker.

Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition is mistaking the volume of his presentation for substance.

He makes reference to accountability issues on this side of the House. Just by way of introducing accountability and unprecedented transparency in terms of what we're doing here, he will know that we've made changes to the sunshine law. That's been expanded now to cover OPG and Hydro One. We've given the Auditor General new powers to audit our hospitals, our school boards, our children's aid societies and the broader public sector. We've expanded the freedom-of-information legislation to include Hydro One, OPG and universities. When it comes to fiscal accountability, we've passed legislation to ensure the Auditor General signs off on the province's books, to ensure that nobody ever again can hide a deficit from the people of Ontario. So when it comes to accountability and transparency and making clear to Ontarians what has happened, we're proud of the record.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Tory: My question is to the Premier, and it's still on the lottery scandal. In the event that those measures that you take such pride in—many of which, by the way, have been flouted in practice by your own ministers, in particular freedom of information. But notwithstanding that, if you really believe in what you just said about transparency, if you really believe in improving the power of backbenchers—and the record shows that you haven't to date, but you've still got a chance—if you really believe in increasing the power of committees, and if you really believe we've got to get to the bottom of every single aspect of this lottery scandal, then the conduct of the Premier's office, the conduct of the minister's office, who knew what in the government, when they knew it and what they did about it are not presently being investigated by anyone, nor have they been investigated by the Ombudsman. Why, then, if you have nothing to hide and if you're such a great believer in transparency and in the role of MPPs, will you not refer this matter to a committee where it can be studied there by members of provincial Parliament? What are you hiding?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): The record shows that for eight years, under that member's party, the standing committee on government agencies called not one committee before it. This Premier

and this government empowered that committee, chaired by a member of your own caucus, to look into government agencies, and they did. They looked into Ontario Lottery and Gaming; they looked into the LCBO; they looked into Hydro One.

In fact, the record is quite clear from the Ombudsman himself in his March 26 press conference, where he says, "I conclude that they"—the OLG—"put profits ahead of public service. I think there was a point, a crossroads, in 2002"—and the member can turn to colleagues of his who were part of the executive council at that time. "At that point," the Ombudsman says, "the OLG could have gone two ways. It could have said, 'We'll apply the law and take the measures to act diligently.' One month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the Supreme Court didn't apply." Then it became a slippery slope.

This government takes actions—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): Premier—
Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Brant.
Member for Erie—Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: Premier, will you call the committee? I'll be there tomorrow. I'll be there the next day. I'll answer every question, and I suspect that any minister under our government, any staff member, will answer every question the committee has.

The question for you, Premier, is, will you do the same for your minister? Will you do the same for your minister's staff, who appeared to have advanced warning? Will you do the same for your campaign manager, Don Guy, and your top spin doctors, Warren Kinsella and Jim Warren?

Premier, we now know what you've got to hide. Call the committee. I'll be there. Get out from under your desk. Call the damn committee. I'll be there. Will you?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of Health.

Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

1420

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I say to the member from Erie—Lincoln, why wait? Tell us now what you knew and what you did and what orders you directed.

As the Ombudsman quite clearly indicated, the Edmonds case, which began in 2001 under this former minister's tenure—Bob Edmonds was treated in an incredibly disrespectful manner. I have apologized to Mr. Edmonds for the treatment that he received. I think it was a shameful episode. I would challenge the member: Would he stand in his place and do likewise? Would he stand and issue that kind of an apology? To date he has not.

This government, this ministry, the members on this side of the House look to the Ombudsman and what he says in his report, where he commends "the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to the report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change." Would

that that had been the case when my friend from Erie—Lincoln was in charge—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Hudak: There's no doubt that what happened to Mr. Edmonds was a travesty. That's why we need to get the facts to see what could have been done to help out Mr. Edmonds. The problem is, in March 2005, the media blew the lid off widespread abuse in the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. The minister knows there were 60-some stories, countless TV stories about it, and the minister did nothing at all—called up no one on the carpet. A year later, The Fifth Estate took the issue further. It appears his staff had advance notice. Let me tell you this: If my staff didn't let me know about this kind of scandal, they would have been fired, not promoted.

Premier, let me tell you this: You call that committee, and I'll answer every question. I know my colleagues will answer every question. We'll appear before the committee. What do you have to hide? I'll be there at the committee. Will you?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I find it somewhat disconcerting that if the member has some information to share, why has he not shed light on it so far? The Ontario Provincial Police have referred many of these matters to the Toronto Police Service. If the member has some information which is germane, I don't know why any honourable member would not step forward with what they knew, what actions they took.

Speaker, I want to assure you full co-operation with that investigation, with the lawful authorities. This member should do likewise. This member should stand in his place and acknowledge the Ombudsman's quite condemning comments about the need for change back in 2002, when it was signalled that these matters had come to a head.

This government has taken action. Even yesterday, the Ombudsman said that these are radical changes he has recommended and he is happy with the government's response. In fact, he goes on to note that the government chose to move forward to the OPP, and that wasn't a recommendation that—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question?

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Under the McGuinty government, working families are being forced to work longer and harder just to pay the bills. Today, despite your government's efforts to hide the facts, we learn that the McGuinty government is making the situation worse once again: The hydro bill is going up once again.

Premier, you promised working families that you were going to freeze hydro bills, a promise that you've now broken not once, not twice, not three times, but a promise you've now broken four times. Premier, did your promise to freeze the hydro bill mean anything at all?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm pleased to report that

the price of our electricity has come down now for the third time. When the price of electricity and distribution prices are taken into account, the average Ontario household will pay 5% less starting May 1 of this year. We think that's good news for ratepayers in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, there is the spin. You try to tell people that the hydro rate is coming down, but in fact, when you put in all of the factors, the hydro bill is going up.

For many families, under the McGuinty government, the hydro rate has gone up by 44% since 2003, but more importantly, the big number at the bottom of the bill has in fact doubled under the McGuinty government, and it's going to go up again as a result of what was announced today.

Premier, working families didn't get the \$40,000-a-year pay increase you gave yourself just before Christmas. Many working families aren't getting a pay increase at all. How are working families supposed to foot the bill for your increase in the hydro bill once again?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I don't know what he's reading, but the OEB announcement today provided for an 8% cut in generation costs year over year. Overall, when you take into account all the other factors—distribution costs, transmission costs—the average Ontarian sees a 5% decrease in their electricity bill year over year.

I'll remind the leader of the third party that the wholesale cost of electricity is lower today than it was in 2002. We have a cleaner, greener, more reliable supply of electricity.

Ontarians have answered the challenge that we set three years ago, and they're better off because the McGuinty government has taken the tough choices to ensure that we see these declining prices.

Mr. Hampton: What it is is another exercise in McGuinty government doublespeak. The figure that matters is the figure at the bottom of the hydro bill, and as a result of today's announcement, the number at the bottom of the hydro bill is going up.

Here's the reality. The Premier gives himself a \$40,000-a-year pay increase. He gives his good friend Tom Parkinson at Hydro One a \$5-million prize to keep quiet. And what do working families get, courtesy of the McGuinty government? A hydro bill that has doubled in the last three and a half years and a hydro bill that's going to go up once again.

Premier, you gave yourself the \$40,000 pay increase, you gave your friend Tom Parkinson the \$5-million gift, and you're giving ordinary working families another increase in the hydro bill. How's that fair?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: There is a complete and utter absence of fact in anything the member just said. The bottom line is, Ontarians are receiving a cut in their electricity bill year over year, and over the life of this government, the price of wholesale electricity is down for large consumers and small consumers.

Let me remind the member that when he was in government, we saw a 40% increase in electricity prices in three years. And do you know when his government announced those increases? New Year's Eve, 1991; New Year's Eve, 1992; and New Year's Eve, 1993.

Lest anybody in the general public think differently, prove that you've given back your 40% raise. You got a big raise; prove that you've given it back—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Sit down, Minister.

New question.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Premier, and my question is about the McGuinty government's commitment to working people in Ontario.

Premier, scabs cross picket lines and take the jobs of other workers. Unethical bosses like to use scabs to bust unions and to force workers to accept lower pay. Working people get hurt in the process, sometimes very seriously.

Today, some members of your caucus joined New Democrats in supporting a bill to ban scabs in Ontario, but your cabinet ministers opposed the bill. The question is this, Premier: Which side are you on? Are you in favour of continuing to have scabs in Ontario or are you in favour of banning scabs in Ontario? What's your position, Premier?

1430

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): This is probably as good a metaphor as any for the NDP's approach to managing the economy and trying to divide people, pit one group against another. He wants us to choose between workers, working people, working families, and management, the private sector and those who are entrepreneurial.

We think the single most important thing we can do in order to compete in this highly competitive global economy is to put in place the kinds of policies that bring people together. So, for example, tomorrow, when I'm addressing the CAW—and I'm happy I've been invited to do that—I'll be delivering the same message to the CAW that I delivered to the Big Three autoworkers, and Toyota, and Honda and parts suppliers as well.

I'm going to reinforce and re-emphasize how it's absolutely essential that we find a way to continue to work together to build a stronger economy that benefits all Ontarians and not just one particular group.

Mr. Hampton: Apparently the Premier believes that having scabs in Ontario brings people together. I want to disabuse the Premier of his mistaken conclusion.

Premier, the provinces of Quebec, British Columbia and Manitoba have effectively put an end to the use of scabs. The result has been fewer strikes, fewer lockouts and people spending more time on the job. More importantly, ordinary working people in those provinces are protected. Workers like Don Milner haven't had that

protection in Ontario. Milner is a worker at Navistar in Chatham who was nearly killed when a van full of scabs ran over him on the picket line.

Premier, do you stand with your MPPs who say that the use of scabs in Ontario is wrong, or are you going to continue to allow scabs to do their terrible work in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I'm proud to put our labour relations record up against the NDP's record any time, any day. We believe in a balanced approach to labour relations in this province, and we believe in the collective bargaining process.

One of the things that I'm extremely proud of, if you look back at 2006, 97% of all contract negotiations were settled without any strike or lockout. That's a record that's unprecedented in this province. There were 70 strikes and lockouts in this province in 2006, one of the lowest levels in the past 15 years.

We believe in a balanced approach to labour relations. It is an approach that has worked well in this province, and it's an approach that we're going to continue to take in this province.

Mr. Hampton: Apparently the Premier and the Minister of Labour don't think it's a serious issue when a worker at a Chatham picket line is almost killed because scabs decide to try to run him down.

What was interesting today is a number of your backbenchers said it on the record and voted against continuing to allow scabs in Ontario. But the McGuinty Minister of Health and the Minister of Community Safety both voted against banning scabs.

Now, Premier, you tried to duck the issue altogether, but this is an issue that is not going to go away. And my question is this: What is your position, Premier? Are you going to continue to allow companies to use scabs? Are you going to continue to allow unethical bosses to recruit scabs and use them to intimidate workers who are simply trying to stand up for their jobs or are you going to do the right thing and ban scabs in Ontario? What's it going to be, Premier?

Hon. Mr. Peters: The government does not intend to bring back legislation that's going to ban replacement workers. We believe in a collective bargaining process in this province, a collective bargaining process that saw, in 2006, 97% of all collective agreements ratified.

What we will not do as a government is do what the NDP did, and just arbitrarily go like this to collective agreements in this province. We will not do what the NDP did in bringing back the social contract. We believe in a fair and balanced approach to labour relations in this province. It's an approach that has worked very well. We saw the labour unrest that took place under the NDP government. We're not going back to those days of the NDP government—the NDP government that saw thousands and thousands of jobs lost in this province and collective agreements ripped up. We're looking ahead in a fair and balanced approach.

ONTARIO LOTTERY
AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier and again concerns the lottery scandal. We have in this House today one former minister who was responsible for the lottery corporation who says that he would agree to come forward to a committee if it asked him to come forward and answer questions. I talked to another former minister this morning, the member for Lanark—Carleton; he indicated to me that he too, if asked by a committee, would be willing to come forward to answer any questions that would be helpful in terms of what happened vis-à-vis the government and the lottery corporation. I'm sure that those responsible during the time of the New Democratic Party government would be willing to do the same. So the only question we're left with is, first of all, why you and your minister in the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government are refusing to allow such a committee to meet and, secondly, why you won't stand up and say in front of that kind of a committee that you and people from your office and people from your minister's office and your minister won't come forward to talk about the things that are not being investigated at present by anybody. Why won't you call the committee and why won't you have your minister agree to appear in front of that committee to explain what went on?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): In fact, this government has had the standing committee on government agencies meet and call the agency. This particular committee is chaired by a member of your own caucus. We welcomed an independent officer of this Legislature doing one of the most thorough and in-depth investigations of its kind, and have not only accepted the recommendations but are working and committed to implementing them all. We have brought in KPMG, the auditor of the gentleman opposite's party, to do a very thorough review. In fact, the Ombudsman talks about the work and says that their report and recommendations should be posted online and each and every one of those recommendations implemented. We've referred substantive and serious matters to the police.

The real question is, given that the member opposite says that Mr. Hudak will take responsibility, why won't he apologize to Mr. Edmonds? Why wouldn't he stand in his place and do the right thing? I have apologized for the actions that occurred under a previous government. I stand in my place and I take those responsibilities seriously, but the people who were in charge at the time should—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Sit down, Minister.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tory: I can only say that when this minister gets up and says that kind of thing, clearly not paying any

attention to the fact that what we're after here is to look at what was known by the government, by this minister, by his office and by the Premier's office in the period after April and before October—it is insulting for him to get up and give that kind of an answer. It is a disgraceful abdication of any accountability or responsibility whatsoever, and it is an insult to this Legislature and to all the people who he is representing here.

You and your party closed down the very committee that you're talking about and you know it. We asked for more time to ask precisely the questions of you that we want to ask today and that other people want us to ask, and you closed that committee down. It's a total disgrace to stand in your place and pretend that that committee examined these things.

I want to ask the Premier this question: Why, when you have two former ministers willing to come forward and answer questions, do you get this kind of insulting answer from your minister, who not only will not agree to come forward—you won't agree to call the committee—but he insults this Legislature and the people of Ontario by suggesting those questions have been asked when clearly there's been no such—

The Speaker: The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I think it's insulting to an independent officer of this Legislature that members opposite will not take responsibility for the fact that they should have acted in 2002, left it to others, swept these matters under the rug. But all members of this chamber and all Ontarians should rest assured that this government takes these matters seriously, is taking the appropriate actions to make sure that the public will have full trust and confidence in their corporation and in the lottery system.

It's regrettable that members opposite chose to look the other way, to put these matters in a closet, to keep it locked away and to do nothing about it. It's regrettable that they refuse, if they do have any information, to share it with us today. It's regrettable, given the shameful, disrespectful treatment that Bob Edmonds received at the hands of the members opposite, that they won't stand in their place and issue an apology to him. I have done so on behalf of all Ontarians, certainly on behalf of the government and on behalf of the members opposite.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto—Danforth): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday your Minister of the Environment made representations about the Ontario Climate Change Act that, to be generous, had no relationship to the text before her, and there were lawyers available, Premier, for yourself or for the minister should you have wished clarification.

Today, members of this House voted for the NDP's Ontario Climate Change Act, which mandates reduction of greenhouse gas levels in this province to 6% below 1990 by 2012. Premier, will you call this bill for a final

vote so that this will become the framework within which any climate change plans your government brings forward will be shaped?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): It is broadly recognized by all thoughtful people that when it comes to developing progressive, intelligent climate change plans, an essential ingredient has to be heavy investment in public transit. The question I have on behalf of the people of Ontario, but especially on behalf of the GTA, is, why is this party now standing up against putting in place something that so many have longed for for so long? Why is it that they want to kill the subway?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Premier, that is absolutely silly. Nobody here is suggesting anything of the sort. The issue here is a very simple—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Health. The Minister of Northern Development.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Health, I will not warn you again.

The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Bisson: To the Premier: You're trying to play politics with what is a very serious issue. The issue before us is a very simple one. We need to do something in order to curb global warming. This province today in the Legislature voted to pass Bill 200 at second reading.

You were able, as Premier, to come into this House and in eight days pass yourself a pay raise, and you're saying today that you're not prepared to do what has to be done to protect the environment of not only Ontario but the rest of North America? I ask you again, are you prepared to act in haste and do what needs to be done, such as you did with voting yourself a pay raise, and allow this bill to go forward with speed?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It's very interesting to watch the NDP trying to unhoist themselves from their own petard. The honourable member opposite says that his leader said no such thing. Let me just remind him exactly what his leader said: "We don't need another subway mega-project ... extending the subway line into a lightly populated York region." That's his definition of this magnificent, unprecedented, level investment that's bringing together many levels of government to invest in public transit.

One of the things I'm sure I'm going to have to speak to tomorrow when I speak to the CAW—they're very concerned about what's going to happen to the TTC orders for Thunder Bay and the carts and the waggys—

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Subway cars.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: —the subway cars. What they're going to want to know is, why is it that the NDP, who are standing up in favour of a responsible, progressive climate change plan, are not also standing up for

jobs in northern Ontario that are desperately needed by northerners?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. New question. The member for Willowdale.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Thank you, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member for Willowdale would like to place his question. Order.

Thank you, to the member for Willowdale. We'll try to get the place calm first.

The member for Willowdale.

Mr. Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Finance. I listened to the doom and gloom of the opposition as they tried to portray Ontario as dismal as it was during the Harris–Eves years. In Willowdale, what I do see every day with my own eyes is how Willowdale is thriving and how the province has prospered under our government.

Minister, the government is required to table the Ontario Economic Accounts for the fourth quarter by tomorrow. Could you please tell us whether you plan to do so and what the update for the quarter will show?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm pleased with the question. I just want to let my friend know that the Ontario Economic Accounts provides an overall assessment of the current state of the Ontario economy and that the accounts were posted on our website. Just let me check my notes from earlier today. The good news is that these accounts show continuing strength and growth in the Ontario economy.

As members in this House will know, the third quarter of 2006 represented a low-water mark for economic growth, and we've seen since that time increasing strength in the economy. The Ontario Economic Update and the Ontario Economic Accounts are the data and the information that simply show that Ontario's new economic strength continued in the last quarter of 2006. We see that it is continuing now as we move into the spring of 2007.

Mr. Zimmer: I'm sure that the people here in Ontario, in Willowdale and in the businesses and homes in our province are glad to hear this. It's also especially good news that it at last shows we've turned the corner and that the last quarter's flat growth was the low-water mark for Ontario. It sounds to me like our economy is doing quite well, given the pressures that are being felt across North America.

Minister, what is the government doing to sustain this growth and ensure we in Ontario continue to see growth like this in the last quarter?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Let me just tell the member that in virtually all numbers on the Ontario Economic

Accounts we're seeing real progress. We're seeing new economic growth. We're seeing job creation in virtually all sectors, and we continue to see job creation in full-time jobs, and that's very encouraging—well-paying jobs as well. We're also seeing increased purchasing power by individuals.

In virtually every category, we're seeing what I refer to in the budget as new economic strength. It's going to give us the capacity to continue the sustainable surpluses which will succeed the era of deficits that we inherited from our predecessors. We're going to continue to make the investments that are necessary to continue this growth.

Notwithstanding what the leader of the third party said about cancelling subways and keeping people in their cars, we're going to build that subway, we're going to build the infrastructure in every corner of the province and we will not be guided by the nonsense that comes from the third party in this province.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier, concerning the lottery scandal. Not a mention from the Minister of Finance about the 124,000 manufacturing jobs lost in the last few years.

Under the lottery scandal, to the Premier: On the Premier's watch, there has been a tiny handful of people who have left the lottery corporation, but there's been no wholesale airing of what has gone on there in the aftermath of the Ombudsman's report or anybody else's report—KPMG and so forth. It's our information that your government, through the lottery corporation, has been insisting that those who have left, this tiny handful, sign agreements where they're prohibited from talking about any aspect of their employment at the lottery corporation, including anything they might have done concerning the lottery scandal.

In the interests of ensuring that all the facts get on the table, as you keep insisting you are interested in doing, even though you refuse to have a committee and refuse to have an independent investigation and so on, are you willing to tell the House that you will give instructions to the lottery corporation board, and through them to the management, that these gag orders will be waived, that they will be cancelled, so that those people can come forward and tell us what they knew, what they did, when they knew it and whom they talked to in your government? Will you cancel those gag orders?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

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Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): The Leader of the Opposition, as he likes to do, often engages in unsubstantiated allegations. I can tell you that the Ombudsman comments on the matters and on the co-

operation with his investigation. It is my expectation that all individuals, all files will be turned over to the police for their review, and they will take the appropriate steps. I expect full co-operation with the proper authorities to get to the bottom of these matters. They are serious allegations that the Ombudsman did make. I think it is incumbent on these individuals to co-operate, just as I think that if, as the member has indicated, he has at least two members of his caucus who have information to share, they too should co-operate. I don't know why they have not come forward of their own volition. Perhaps they have to be shamed into it.

We know that they refused to do the right thing and issue an apology to Mr. Edmonds for the disgraceful and shameful treatment that he was subjected to under a previous government. I have in fact apologized—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Okay. Supplementary.

Mr. Tory: To the Premier again: I would point out that the Ombudsman says, on page 21, that 2004 was "a banner year for controversial insider prize claims." In 2004, when you were the government of Ontario—there's no question about that.

The only thing you didn't do in that long-winded answer about nothing was to answer the question. If you really want all of these people to co-operate fully—the people who used to work at the lottery corporation, who probably know an awful lot about this, including the role of your government and your personal office, and you and the Premier and his people—then all I asked you was, will you address a concern I'm sure they have, that if they signed a piece of paper that had a gag order in it that you insisted on when they left, you will write them a letter, have your lawyers write them a letter, and say that that gag order is waived, it's cancelled, so those people can talk to anybody they want about what went on in your government and in that corporation during the time of this lottery scandal? All you have to do is stand up and say yes, you will cancel those gag orders. That's all I'm asking. Get up and do it if you have any courage at all.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Once again, the leader of the official opposition traffics in fiction. I've made no such insistence on any such order as he alleges. I can tell you, though, that the Ombudsman does comment on the openness and responsiveness of this minister and this government to get to the bottom of these matters, to take the appropriate action.

The member would know that between the Ombudsman and KPMG there are some 60 recommendations. Seventeen of those recommendations have already been implemented, and 25 more will be complete by the end of June. The other 18 are ongoing and will take a little bit more time. I want to provide assurance to this member, to all members of this House, indeed to all Ontarians, that each and every one of those recommendations, as the Premier has indicated, are ongoing and will be implemented. We will not rest until Ontarians' trust and confidence is in their corporation so that they know when they spend their loonie or toonie on a game through

Ontario Lottery and Gaming that it is a fair one, it is one that they can have confidence in. Members should be fully confident that will happen.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Since 1999, the city of Toronto has been forced to manage downloaded provincially mandated program costs, such as the ODSP and the ODB. It has been worsened by your government's failure to honour your own cost-sharing and funding agreements.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Could we have order so I can hear the question. The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: In 2007, your government's funding shortfall for the administration of Ontario Works, per diem rates for emergency hostel services and child care will cost the city of Toronto \$71 million. The city of Toronto council is contemplating suing you in a court of law for non-payment. My question to you is simple: Will you commit to paying the city of Toronto the \$71 million that you owe, or do you prefer to be taken to court as Ontario's first deadbeat finance minister?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I always appreciate questions from my friend from Beaches–East York. It gives me, in this instance, for example, an opportunity to simply put some facts in front of him and certainly the people of Toronto.

Back in 2003, when we inherited our responsibilities, the provincial government assisted the city of Toronto to the tune of about \$130 million. That was the Conservative support. I don't want to go back to the NDP support. Since that time, four years later, that support has increased by 400%. That is over \$700 million. Those investments go into transportation, housing and the support of social services. They basically go into every single aspect of the great city of Toronto's work for the great people of Toronto.

I am proud of that 400% increase. I believe the city of Toronto can use those resources, and I'm proud to say that we continue to work with the people of Toronto to continue down that track.

The Acting Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Again to the Minister of Finance, Hamiltonians and Hamilton council have slammed your government and your absentee Liberal MPPs. Your refusal to provide Hamilton with sustainable annual funding is causing higher property taxes, higher transit rates and decaying infrastructure in that city. Hamilton got \$5 million less than it needs this year to pay for your social services programs. You fixed the downloading for some 905 municipalities but gave older, established communities, like the city of Hamilton, the back of your hand. Minister, will you listen to what Hamilton and I have been telling you for years and step

up and fix the download, or do you need neon flashing lights and an anti-McGuinty campaign to get the message?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: The sad news in this Legislature is that the members of the New Democratic Party have simply lost credibility in the city of Toronto, in Hamilton and right across the province. Just hours ago, my friend from Beaches–East York was up in my riding, waxing eloquent to the seniors of my riding. Not once did he mention that his leader plans to cancel the subway that is going to that riding.

I want to tell my friend from Hamilton that as her party has decided to cancel the subway, that means that the steel coming out of Hamilton will not build subway cars in Thunder Bay, will not put tracks down to take people out of their cars and get on the subway. They have lost their credibility, not only in Hamilton, Beaches and Vaughan but right across Ontario.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Last week, when you were in Japan participating in this government's aggressive international outreach strategy to build stronger trade and investment ties with key global markets, a member of the NDP stood up in this House and criticized you for not being in Windsor when the regrettable announcement was released that 375 people had lost their jobs at the General Motors Windsor transmission plant. Now that we welcome you back from your very successful trip, I would like to take this opportunity to let you respond to the member of the third party.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): Thank you so much for that question. I'm very happy to do that. In fact, I think the best way is to paraphrase an e-mail that the member from Beaches–East York received from the very leaders of the GM transmission CAW and what they said when they saw that he had asked a question, and perhaps he has read the e-mail. It said:

"I want to personally tell you that Minister Pupatello was the first, and only member of the provincial or federal government to have the courtesy to call us to see ... what assistance her office could be.... We have had approximately 36 different meetings that started ... January 26th and continue.... Not one of these meetings have been with any member of the provincial NDP party. I find this extremely unacceptable...."

This is written by Bill Reeves, the president of CAW Local 1973.

I think you want to come for a ride with me to my town because I've got some things to show you, Mister.

Mr. Hoy: Yesterday, the leader of the NDP introduced his motion calling for immediate funding for construction of a tunnelled access route in Windsor. In his motion, he openly attacked you and the Minister of Energy for not doing enough on this file. The NDP and

PCs should realize that, as cabinet ministers, you and the Minister of Energy cannot state preferences for border-crossing solutions prior to the final recommendations made by the binational expert panel.

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Since the NDP and the PCs do not have the nerve to ask you questions on this issue when you're actually here in the House, what do you say to this group about the government, in their defence, and their work in your community?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I want to tell you how proud I am, and perhaps it is time we start bragging about how we have defended our community and the investments we have made in the city of Windsor.

Let me say this to the member from Beaches–East York in particular: I will take him on a tour of what we're doing, not just for working people but for our whole city, with investments in Nemak, DaimlerChrysler, Ford, GM and Valiant, all of which created jobs for my community and which that party opposed.

I will take him on any day of the week, but on the way to Windsor, we're going to stop at FAT Aerospace and I think we'll get him some ball bearings so he can ask me a question in the House.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I'm sure the Minister of Economic Development thinks she's very clever. If a man got up and said something like that in this House, he'd be in trouble for that sort of thing.

My question is for the Premier, concerning the lottery scandal. The Ombudsman wrote in his report, "The danger is too great that the OLG will continue to fall back into its old habits of coddling retailers and dismissing consumers' legitimate complaints."

We see that this continues to happen on a continuous basis. The OLG doesn't act until it gets raised in the House. Just this very week, another complaint was raised with the Premier in the House, and he said, "Let me say ... as a result of raising this matter here today, this has elevated it automatically as a priority, I'm sure, for the OLG."

This is not a sign of a change—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, I want to hear the question. I will not warn you again.

Leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Tory: When you talk about how they get attention at the OLG based on whether it's raised in this House or not, this is not the sign of a changed corporate culture. It was the Premier who said that himself. This will only come with a housecleaning, starting at the top and working its way through the corporation.

Will you commit to bringing us a report on exactly what has happened over there in terms of how many people have been disciplined and how many people's

employment has been terminated? As far as we can see, it's less than a handful of people, when the Ombudsman himself said the corporate culture was rotten and needed substantial change. When are you going to report to us on that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): In fact, I do agree with the Ombudsman's assessment. That's why I accepted his report. That's why I'm committed to implementing his recommendations. That's why the board has hired, on an interim basis, Michelle DiEmanuele, one of the acknowledged experts in change management and in fact in changing corporate culture. We're indeed fortunate to have someone with her expertise both inside the public and private sectors to bring about some of the changes in the corporate culture that the Ombudsman says clearly need to happen.

Of course, the member opposite always wants to ignore what the Ombudsman had to say about that corporate culture: that the crossroads, as he put it, was in 2002—where if he looks to his left and to his right, he will find members of the executive council.

The Leader of the Opposition has said there is information that Mr. Hudak and Mr. Sterling, the members from Erie–Lincoln and Lanark–Carleton, have to shed light on these matters. Why is the leader of the official opposition preventing these members from coming forward, sharing what they knew, sharing what they did, letting the public know and helping us get to the bottom of these matters?

Mr. Tory: I've been travelling for the last couple of days, and people ask, more than almost anything else, "Why have we not seen any kind of consequences? Why haven't we seen anybody lose their job?" It's the same question they ask after the Auditor General's report comes out. They can't believe that the McGuinty government is responsible for wasting hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money and no one ever loses their job. It's just okay because it's the taxpayers' money. It's the same thing here. We have a lottery corporation scandal on your watch, on Dalton McGuinty's watch, with \$100 million ripped off from people in this province, and no one, with the exception of maybe one person, loses their job, no one is disciplined, nothing happens, except a lot of statements from you about good intentions of things to come.

The people want to know what changes have been made, who did lose their job, who was disciplined as a result of this, and I think you have some responsibility to get up in your place and report to them on that, not talk about reports and things to happen in years to come. They want to know now, when they're buying the tickets, what you have done about it, what changes have been made, who's lost their job and who's been disciplined. Why don't you get up and give us a straight answer instead of one of these windy things you pretend is an answer?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, a seven-point security plan has been brought forward and implemented. The Ombudsman comments on this and many other things in his report, where he asks—and I want to quote for the member opposite—“Is the government committed to reforming the system and perhaps making it the best in the world?” The Ombudsman answers his own question. He says, “Certainly I would find that very encouraging.”

Beyond that, I think the responsibility rests here, first and foremost, with the OLG. The Ombudsman calls for this change in culture. I agree. I agree that it should have been done in 2002, as the Ombudsman indicates, but these matters were swept under the rug by members who sit in your caucus today. That is not acceptable to me, and that is not acceptable to this government.

We are acting and implementing the recommendation the Ombudsman has made. He says that if that happens, and he has confidence that it will, in fact Ontarians should have and will have full trust and confidence in their lottery system in this province. That's—

The Acting Speaker: New question.

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Premier: We've got 2,000 acres of juice grape vineyards in this province, most of it in Niagara. It's being farmed by 105 families, most of them in Niagara, some for as many as four generations. With the Cadbury Schweppes beverage plant closing its doors in St. Catharines, we not only lose those 26 jobs, but these farmers—their families—are desperate. Sir, what are you going to do to assist them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I answer this question because I am the minister responsible for something called the VQA, which is the act that governs all Ontario grape wines.

I would just say that we're dealing with an enormously important industry here, as I think the Legislature understands but the public may not fully appreciate. We get almost a million tourists a year into our wine areas. We've got 12,000 acres of grapes planted. We have almost a \$500-million industry here.

I would say to the member that the issue is intertwined with our wine industry. We are always looking at ways that we can improve the profitability of our grape growers. But we also do that in conjunction with our wineries and our tourism industry. What are we doing? We are continuing to do things to build our wine industry, which will continue to increase the sale of our Ontario-grown grapes.

Mr. Kormos: Premier, the problem is that these people aren't growing wine grapes; they're growing juice grapes. It's a historic agricultural activity in Niagara, and it's related to the historic industry of bottling grape juice. They can't convert to wine grape overnight. (1) They

need a replanting program, and (2) there's always a risk of a glut of wine grape in Niagara region. Stand up, sir, and tell us now that you're going to make immediate amendments to the Wine Content Act to start accommodating and utilizing more Ontario grape, and you're going to start to address the issue.

These people are desperate. They've still got to pay mortgages; they've still got to pay the bills. But as of the end of this year—the end of this season—their income is zero; nothing. Their product has no market. They need your help. What are you going to do for them?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Again, I just say that the solution you've proposed is one that I don't think the industry itself has recommended to us. What is actually going on is that the Ministry of Agriculture, I know, is in active consultation with these people. That's one thing we've done very specifically. Secondly, I know that we've provided \$1 million of assistance for Ontario grape growers, to support the industry.

What are we doing? We are continuing to build our wine industry, which will continue to grow the size of our grape crop. The Ministry of Agriculture is meeting with these growers to see what we can do in the short term. In the long term, I would say to all of us, we will continue to build our Ontario wine industry, an enormously important industry, and we as a government are committed to seeing that it prospers and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Thank you. New question.

1510

SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London—Fanshawe): Minister, last month you came to London and brought with you \$4 million to upgrade the North London Optimist Community Centre and the Thames pool as part of the McGuinty government's \$190-million economic stimulus plan. Minister, let me tell you that the city of London and MPPs Matthews, Bentley and Peters, along with myself, are very pleased that the McGuinty government makes these investments. When this recreation complex is complete, London residents will have more opportunity—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Order. Are you finished with your question? Okay. Minister.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): The NDP may laugh at the people of London, but I want to congratulate the effective, hard-working caucus from London, Ontario, who stand up for their constituents time and time again.

I was very pleased to be there, not with one of those famous Tory or NDP rubber cheques but \$4 million from the provincial government for the Thames pool and the North London Optimist Community Centre. I want to thank the member for London—Fanshawe, and I want to thank Mr. Bentley, Deb Matthews and Steve Peters for believing that there is a need for government support of

these recreation complexes throughout Ontario, and warn the people of London that if John Tory and the Conservative Party ever get their hands on government, they will say no to these kinds of community infrastructure investments.

The McGuinty government believes that it's important to invest in a culture of wellness. We're in London. We've been there in the past, and we'll be there in the future.

PETITIONS

NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to save the MNR.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) plays a vital role in the protection and management of the natural resources that belong to all Ontarians; and

"Whereas the MNR budget for 2006-07 is 24% less, in real terms, than it was in 1992-93; and

"Whereas vital programs relating to fish and wildlife, provincial parks, forestry, and other MNR activities continue to be cut back; and

"Whereas the aesthetic, cultural, economic, educational, environmental, recreational and social value of our natural resources far exceeds the cost of protecting and managing them;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That funding of the Ministry of Natural Resources must be increased to a level that will enable it to stop cutting existing programs and provide full funding to all existing programs as well as any new programs that may be required to ensure the effective protection and management of Ontario's natural resources."

I support this petition.

TUITION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I present a petition from the University of Toronto Students' Administrative Council.

"To Stop Tuition Fee Hikes and Improve Access and Quality In Post-Secondary Education

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government cancelled the tuition fee freeze after only two years and approved fee increases of up to 36% over the next four years; and

"Whereas tuition fees in Ontario have increased by more than four times the rate of inflation over the past 15 years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians oppose tuition fee increases and support greater public funding for colleges and universities; and

"Whereas improvements to student financial assistance are undermined by fee increases; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's recent increase to student loan limits is set to push student debt to approximately \$28,000 for a four-year program; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags significantly behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to stop tuition fee hikes and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"—reduce tuition fees to 2004 levels for all students in Ontario and implement an immediate tuition fee freeze;

"—increase public funding for post-secondary education to promote access and quality;

"—expand access to financial aid in Ontario, especially for part-time students; and

"—double the number of upfront, need-based grants for Ontario students."

Thousands have signed this, and I'm proud to affix my signature as well.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly to regulate zoos to protect animals and communities.

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I believe in this petition, and I will affix my signature to it.

LAKEVIEW GENERATING STATION

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I have a petition from the Lakeview ratepayers association that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas there should be no decisions on the future development of the Lakeview generating station grounds until:

"A full, independent environmental assessment, including air, water, soil samples and a health study of

long-term residents, is completed to determine the historical, current and accumulative impact of industrial pollutants on the existing environment of Lakeview, southeast Mississauga and its citizens; and

"Government includes this assessment and gives its findings equal weight in all mandatory environmental reports regarding future development of the Lakeview generating grounds."

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

"Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston."

Of course I agree with the petition, and I have signed it.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by a number of my constituents:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and

demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

I affix my signature as I agree with the petition.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Regulate Zoos to Protect Animals and Communities

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I have affixed my signature as well.

1520

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I just received a petition from the good folks of Walkerton and Mount Albert. I want to thank Royce Mahood for preparing this petition for me.

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition regarding lab services at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare ... has indicated its support for moving significant parts of its

laboratory operations to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie; and

"Whereas MAHC has indicated that it intends to cease doing community-based lab work if it does not receive \$150,000 more in funding from the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the impact of such decisions will negatively affect timely health care delivery to residents of Muskoka, while increasing the overall cost to taxpayers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain hospital and community-based lab services at the existing facilities in Bracebridge and Huntsville, including restoration of lab services that have recently been contracted out to hospitals in Sudbury and Barrie."

I support this petition.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program."

I agree with the petitioners, so I affix my signature as well.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I just want to thank Don Lindsay of Wasaga Beach for sending me this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 122,000 households across Ontario are on waiting lists for affordable housing, enduring wait times of five to 10 years;

"Whereas housing affordability problems are worsening in Ontario, with one tenant household in five paying at least 50% of its income on rent, and almost 65,000 facing eviction in 2005 because they couldn't afford to pay their rent;

"Whereas Ontario's current social housing stock is increasingly rundown, with tenants forced to endure degrading conditions, including mould, cockroaches and mice; and

"Whereas the cost of ignoring the plight of our poorly housed and homeless neighbours affects all citizens of Ontario through increased health costs, emergency shelter costs and other public expenditures;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure there is a major allocation of funding for affordable and supportive housing in Ontario's 2007 provincial budget, with a commitment to release this funding quickly; and

"To urge the government of Ontario to reassume financial responsibility for the cost and repair of the current social housing stock which was downloaded onto municipalities, who cannot afford repair and upkeep costs."

I have signed this petition and I agree with it.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I want to thank Jim and Jane Hunter from Flesherton, Ontario, who are very concerned about how we protect animals in zoos in Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I agree with the intent of this petition and will affix my signature to it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to do with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare funding, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas studies indicate that overcrowded emergency rooms result in higher mortality rates; and

"Whereas growing demand and lack of availability of long-term-care beds place increased pressure on acute care beds; and

"Whereas the operating budget for MAHC must reflect the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services for the people of Muskoka-East Parry Sound and allocate more long-term-care beds for Muskoka-East Parry Sound."

I support this petition.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to do with lab services, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the residents of the communities served by Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) wish to maintain current community lab services; and

"Whereas maintaining community lab services promotes physician retention and benefits family health teams; and

"Whereas the funding for community lab services is currently a strain on the operating budget of MAHC; and

"Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas the operating budget for MAHC needs to reflect the growing demand for services in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health increase the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to permit continued operation of community laboratory services."

I support this petition.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): It's that time of the day when I rise, pursuant to standing order 55, to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week, and page Alex is going to help me deliver this to the table.

On Monday, April 16, we have an opposition day motion from the official opposition; in the evening, third reading of Bill 155, the Electoral System Referendum Act.

On Tuesday, April 17, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 198, Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act; and in the evening, second reading of Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act.

On Wednesday, April 18, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 198, Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act.

On Thursday, April 19, the afternoon is to be confirmed.

I'd like to hand that to page Alex.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFEGUARDING AND SUSTAINING ONTARIO'S WATER ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LA SAUVEGARDE ET LA DURABILITÉ DES EAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. Broten moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 198, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario's water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act / Projet de loi 198, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario afin d'assurer la sauvegarde et la durabilité des eaux de l'Ontario, à apporter des modifications connexes à la Loi de 2002 sur la salubrité de l'eau potable et à abroger la Loi sur le contrôle des transferts d'eau.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Speaker recognizes the minister.

1530

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I will be sharing my time with the parliamentary assistant in the Ministry of the Environment, Jeff Leal, the member for Peterborough.

Last week I had the privilege of introducing important new legislation in this House in conjunction with my cabinet colleague Minister Ramsay. The proposed Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act is designed to keep our vital water resources protected and plentiful and to support the health and prosperity of our people today and for the future.

Today I am very pleased to have the opportunity to outline for this House some of the provisions of the act in greater detail as we move forward with second reading. As the honourable members know, our government has acted decisively throughout our mandate. We have implemented some of the most rigorous water protection measures in North America. Those actions include important protections for the waters of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin.

The Great Lakes represent the largest single supply of fresh water in the world. Three out of every four people in Ontario rely on the Great Lakes basin for their drinking water. Many millions of people living in communities throughout Ontario rely on the Great Lakes. Our government is determined to provide the Great Lakes ecosystem with the protection and wise management that it needs and that it deserves. Under provincial law, we do not own the water. No one owns the water in its natural state. It is held in common for the benefit of everyone. We have been given stewardship of this valuable resource, borrowing it from our children and grandchildren. It is our fundamental responsibility to pass this resource on to them in better condition than we found it.

There are a great many pressures on the source of fresh water. And while we don't know exactly what im-

pact climate change will have on our water resources in Ontario, we do know that it is going to affect many different aspects of our environment and our ecosystem. That makes our actions all the more timely, and adds an even greater imperative to what we do here and now to protect this resource for the future.

The Great Lakes basin has been a foundation on which we have built our history, our growth and success as a province and the tremendous quality of life that Ontarians enjoy today. I am reminded about this every day, since my family and I are fortunate to live close to the lake in my home riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I am committed to doing what it takes to preserve and protect this rich resource and wonderful gift of nature.

I am very proud to be part of a government that takes our responsibilities seriously as environmental stewards on behalf of all Ontarians. We are deeply committed to protecting, managing and conserving our precious natural resources of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin to meet our needs today and, most importantly, well into the future.

Je suis très fier de faire partie d'un gouvernement qui prend au sérieux son rôle de gardien de l'environnement au nom de toute la population ontarienne.

Nous sommes profondément résolus à protéger, à gérer et à sauvegarder les précieuses ressources naturelles du bassin des Grands Lacs et du Saint-Laurent afin qu'elles répondent à nos besoins aujourd'hui et dans un avenir lointain.

That is why we have proposed the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act. The bill would include even more rigorous protections for our Great Lakes waters so that we can create a healthy, sustainable legacy that can be passed on to our children and grandchildren.

If this bill is passed, it will enable us to implement the historic Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. As members know, that agreement was signed in December 2005 by Ontario, Quebec and eight US Great Lakes states, including Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

The agreement provides a framework for all 10 participating jurisdictions to manage, protect and conserve the waters in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin using a set of common principles. Under the agreement, the commitments we have made are to be phased in and each participating province and state is required to pass or modify their laws, policies and programs accordingly.

It also creates a framework for decision-making. It allows us to take an integrated approach to management that looks at both water quality and quantity. We can look at where water is taken from, where it's going and how it is going to be used.

One of the critical features of the agreement is that it provides for a ban on the transfer of water out of the basin. While Ontario has had a regulation in place since 1999 to prohibit such transfers, the agreement makes this provision common to all 10 Great Lakes jurisdictions.

We heard concerns before introduction that the proposed legislation covering water transfers between watersheds did not go far enough. We heard these concerns and we acted on them. That's why we've strengthened provisions on cumulative impacts.

The bill would also introduce new regulation-making authorities so that regulations can be made for further protections that are consistent with the agreement. As well, the new municipal working group and the annex advisory panel will be looking into addressing transfers between watersheds and providing advice for the government on the development of regulations.

The bill would enable us to reinforce basin-wide environmental standards while improving science-based decision-making throughout the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region. At the same time, it would strengthen Ontario's existing ban on water diversions by enshrining it in statute while promoting greater water conservation efforts by all the signatory jurisdictions.

Another important reason for this bill is that it would enable us to bring Ontario's approach to water-taking permits into the 21st century. Under the current provisions of the Ontario Water Resources Act, subject to certain exceptions, water takings that began on or before March 29, 1961, are not required to obtain a permit to take water. What worked more than 40 years ago does not meet the needs of Ontario today. We need to bring our management of these resources in line with the times and take a modern, science-based approach to water protection and conservation.

The proposed legislation would allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to pass regulations requiring that such historical water takings obtain a permit. That would enhance our ability to manage Ontario water resources effectively by giving us additional scientific and qualitative information on how our water resources are being used.

We will be consulting with the public as well as those organizations that will be affected. We plan to work closely with those organizations on grandfathering as well as discussing what is an appropriate transition process so that we can make it work and work well for everyone.

In addition—and this is a first for Ontario—the proposed act would give the government a new regulation-making authority to develop and implement water conservation charges. It is fair and reasonable to ask Ontario's commercial and industrial water users to contribute their fair share toward the cost of managing the resources they use. Until now, large commercial and industrial water users have not been paying anything towards the cost of managing the quantity of the water they use in their businesses. The proposed legislation would enable the government to introduce water conservation charges for these high-volume users.

Let me be clear: This will be quite easy for water users to adapt to. Most of these users already have an annual reporting requirement, and this will line up with what they are already doing. Revenue from the new charges

would cover some of the significant costs the province incurs in managing these resources and also promote water conservation.

Let me also be clear: The proposed new water conservation charge is a management measure. The revenues from this initiative will all go directly toward the costs of water quantity management.

As members may know, there are significant costs associated with managing Ontario's water resources, and they will only grow in the future. Under the proposed legislation, the amount of a charge must relate to the goal of water management and conservation. By law, the charges would not be allowed to generate more revenue than is needed to achieve these goals.

Many commercial and industrial users in Ontario are currently benefiting from the province's water management efforts because they rely on access to clean, safe, abundant water supplies. We believe that it is only fair that these users contribute to the cost of managing these resources. We also believe that introducing a water conservation charge will encourage more companies to make greater efforts to conserve the amount of water they use. We are committed to ensuring that proposed charges are fair across all commercial and industrial sectors and equitable within each of the sectors affected. To this end, we have initiated a consultation process to work out the details of the proposed charge with our stakeholders.

1540

The proposed legislation provides further proof of our government's deep and abiding commitment to protecting Ontario's water resources. From the beginning, we have made protecting and conserving the province's water supplies a high priority. Indeed, it is one of the hallmarks of this government, and that strong focus continues with this bill.

Le projet de loi est une nouvelle preuve que notre gouvernement est profondément résolu à protéger les ressources en eau de l'Ontario. Depuis le début, la protection et la préservation des ressources en eau de la province sont pour nous une haute priorité. En fait, c'est un des traits distinctifs de notre gouvernement. Cette grande priorité est manifeste dans ce projet de loi.

As the House knows, we made a commitment to implement all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations in his report on the Walkerton inquiry, and I am proud to say that all those recommendations have either been implemented or are under way. Last year, we passed the historic Clean Water Act, based on the fundamental principle that prevention is the critical first stage in protecting Ontario's water sources. The Clean Water Act provides for the management of Ontario's drinking water sources on a watershed basis. It empowers hundreds of local communities to manage their own drinking water sources in a more scientific and effective manner than in the past, and that represents a major step in protecting the future of our vital water supplies for future generations.

The Clean Water Act is an excellent example of how our government has demonstrated strong leadership in water protection. But, as members know, there are

numerous other examples. These actions include bringing in more stringent requirements for the training of water treatment plant owners and operators. They include increasing the inspection requirements for water treatment plants and drinking water testing labs. And they include the hiring of more water treatment inspectors and enforcement specialists.

These measures are all designed to protect and maintain the quality of our water resources and ultimately to ensure the continued good health of our people in Ontario.

Ces mesures visent à protéger et à maintenir la qualité de nos ressources en eau—et, finalement, à préserver la bonne santé de notre population.

Our proposed Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act is building further on the significant progress we have made so far.

I am pleased to say that the proposed legislation before us today has received strong expressions of support from a number of key stakeholders, including the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Environmental Defence, the Sierra Legal Defence Fund and Pollution Probe. Support has also been expressed by high-volume water users such as Molson Breweries, which called the bill "a proactive and balanced initiative that will help protect Ontario's water resources for generations to come." Toronto Mayor David Miller has also expressed his support for this initiative, pointing out that "cities have a great interest in preserving, protecting, and restoring the ecosystem health of the Great Lakes," and that the "binational agreement is an important first step in ensuring that all governments around the Great Lakes basin work together to protect this invaluable resource."

By signing the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement, this offers us an important new opportunity to take further decisive action to protect and preserve Ontario's valuable water resources.

Promoting water conservation, both through water conservation charges as well as requiring proponents of large transfers in the future to incorporate cost-effective conservation measures, is a vital element in our plan to protect these resources.

The proposed bill is further evidence that our government takes its environmental stewardship responsibilities very seriously. It is evidence that as a green government we are committed to demonstrating strong leadership and taking strong action with respect to the environment.

This proposed legislation will help us build on the success of the Clean Water Act and our many other water protection initiatives. It will further strengthen the protections that are already in place for the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence River basin and our other water resources. Perhaps most importantly, the bill will take us closer to our goal of building stronger, healthier communities and a brighter, more prosperous future for people throughout Ontario, and that will be a legacy we can all be very proud of.

I look forward to the rest of the debate, and will now pass my time to the member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It is indeed a pleasure to follow the Minister of the Environment and have the opportunity to speak today. The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore is acknowledged across this province as a leader on Ontario's environment, and I am very pleased to have the opportunity to be her parliamentary assistant and to have a chance to speak on Bill 198 this afternoon.

I am pleased to stand before the Legislature in support of the proposed Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act. Today we are debating an excellent piece of legislation that has an important contribution to make to the future we all want for our Ontario. We want an Ontario that is strong, healthy and prosperous and an Ontario where our children and their children can grow and thrive in clean communities. It's impossible to overstate the necessity of safe, well-protected water to help create the future we envision for this great province.

Ontario's environment minister, the Honourable Laurel Broten, has already spoken in detail about the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act. She has clearly articulated the fundamental role the Great Lakes have played in our past and will continue to play in our lives going down the road. Ontario's communities are founded on these waters and thrive because of them.

My home riding of Peterborough is a perfect example. It sits on the Trent-Severn Waterway, which begins at Lake Ontario and supports the health and economy of communities throughout cottage country. The province's waterways are equally important to communities throughout this great province.

In the Great Lakes and the water resources of this province, all Ontarians have inherited a great natural wonder, and we have inherited a great responsibility to protect and sustain them. The worst thing we could do is deny future generations like my son Braden, who is nine, and my daughter Shanae, who is seven, the great benefits of these waters that we have enjoyed and that are a basis of our high quality of life.

The point was not lost on those who came before us. Starting about 40 years ago, communities on the Great Lakes basin started waking up to the damage we're inflicting on those world-renowned waterways. They saw that short-sighted disregard for the lakes would be detrimental to Ontario's future.

They took decisive action, and we've seen the results and reaped the benefits. We have seen steady improvements in the Great Lakes in recent decades. There has been a major reduction in discharges and in levels of some pollutants. There are healthier fish and wildlife populations today, and some recreational uses have been restored.

Good progress is being made in addressing areas of concern throughout the Great Lakes. But even with these improvements, we realize today that much more needs to be done. Report after report has told us that, yes, we've made good progress, but also that Ontario's waterways continue to face great threats.

Today, we face the same situation that was faced by previous generations: There is a problem, and we need to act decisively. Are we up to this historic challenge? Are we going to meet our responsibility to future generations? I am proud to belong to a government that answers these questions with a resounding yes, and I'm prouder still that we're backing our words with action, and action is always louder than just words.

We're not hiding behind continued growth and prosperity as excuses for allowing our waters to be misused. We are taking bold steps this afternoon to protect Ontario's water resources and the well-being of future generations.

1550

I believe the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act represents a new pinnacle for water protection in this great province. It builds on the solid environmental record of the McGuinty government. We took office with a promise to ensure that Ontario's water is protected from its source to the tap. We are delivering on that key promise.

We have passed the Clean Water Act, giving communities unprecedented ability to protect their local drinking water sources. There are more stringent requirements in place for facilities, laboratories and personnel that Ontarians rely upon for the protection of their drinking water. More water inspectors, investigators and compliance staff are working to ensure that our tough standards are being met. We're investing in source protection planning. We're working with the agricultural community and small rural businesses to help them better protect the waters that are the source of their livelihood. These actions reflect the determination of our government to ensure that clean, healthy and well-protected water will be a part of Ontario's bright future.

The legislation we're considering today will help us to significantly advance our efforts. The Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act will protect against two challenges: threats from beyond our basin and unsustainable water management practices within the basin itself.

If passed, the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act will elevate to statute the ban on transfers of water out of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River, Nelson and Hudson Bay basins. It is true that this ban was contained in regulation, but by elevating the ban to the level of legislation, we're giving the people of Ontario the protection they need and deserve. This bill will also prohibit new or increased transfers of water from between watersheds in the Great Lakes, with only strictly regulated exceptions.

The Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act will also give Ontario the ability, for the first time ever, to establish water conservation charges for commercial and industrial users of water. This will bring Ontario up to speed with other jurisdictions in Canada and indeed around the world. Conservation charges would help Ontario fund water management activities while encour-

aging conservation and discouraging wasteful practices in the industrial and commercial sectors.

We are also proposing much-needed improvements that would modernize our program for issuing permits to take water. The bill would include a regulation-making authority to require permits for historical water takings that have not had to obtain them in the past.

What we have proposed is a fair and modernized approach designed to protect and sustain Ontario's water resources for the benefit of all Ontarians. And we will be consulting with the public and with stakeholders on the regulations as we move forward with this legislation.

By introducing water conservation charges and updating our permit-to-take-water regime, we're bringing Ontario's water management practices into the 21st century. If passed, the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act would strengthen the ban on diversions of water from our basins, implement the agreement's prohibition against new and increased intra-basin transfers, promote the conservation of our precious water resources, reinforce consistent standards throughout these vital waterways and ensure that the decision-making is based on the best available science.

I urge all members of this House to work with us to pass legislation that will help ensure better-protected waters and a stronger, more prosperous future for Ontario.

Ontario is commissioned to take the lead on this piece of legislation. I am proud to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 198 this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): We're very supportive of the concept, except for one little bit. There's one little bit that gives me concern. The devil is in the details, I suppose, but giving yourself the right to tax or to charge for water is a departure from the history of Ontario. Never before in Ontario have we charged for water. When you get your water and when you pay your water bill, you're paying for the delivery and treatment of water; you're not paying anything for the cost of the water itself.

Once you have that piece of legislation in place, it would be a rare event that over a period of time that, first, the large users would be taxed—and what effect that has. I know the large water bottlers work on extremely small margins. That's why most of them that have survived have absolutely huge volumes, because the only way you can make any money in that business is with a huge volume, because the margin on each individual bottle is so very, very small. Putting a tax on that product could very well see those companies become uncompetitive very quickly.

The Liberal philosophy, of course, is: If it moves, you tax it; if it still moves, you regulate it; and if it's still moving after all that, raise the taxes a bit and just see how much you can take out of the industry.

So, when water starts to be taxed, is it possible with this bill—and I think it is in this bill. If you wanted to start metering home wells, for instance, private wells,

could you meter a home well and charge somebody on a sideroad in Ontario for the water they use out of their well? Is that possible under this bill? I think it is, and that would be a terrible mistake. Other than that small part of the bill, we're pretty supportive of the rest of it.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): With this bill, I'm not sure if the glass is half full or half empty, but I do know there are some pretty serious cracks in the glass.

I think we can all agree in this House that protecting our drinking water is vital. Indeed, you could make a pretty strong argument that it is an issue of paramount importance. Without water, you can't have life. Yet we have before us a bill that appears to have been slapped together in a rather hasty fashion that has some glaring omissions.

I know that later this afternoon my colleague from Toronto-Danforth will be expanding upon some of these omissions and the concerns we have, but what strikes me is that this is something the governing party campaigned on in 2003. They've had three and a half years to bring forward something substantial and something that covers all the bases, shall we say, and they haven't done that. But they have found the time to pursue other things, and we know what one of those was. It's not one that the members opposite like to talk about, but it's one where four days before Christmas they were able to ram through a raise for themselves fairly quickly. Yet on protecting our drinking water, we have to wait three and a half years and what we get is a bill full of holes.

Among the omissions that we see in this bill is that there's no guideline for quality of water that is to be returned to the basin. There's no mention of adaptation to permits and transfers with respect to the current science on climate change and the effects on water levels. There are no standards for consumptive use and no indication of how average consumption will be calculated. I know that the member opposite is going to be limited in his response, but perhaps he could try to answer some of these concerns, some of these omissions.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I'd like to compliment the Minister of the Environment, Ms. Broten, and the parliamentary assistant as well, the member from Peterborough, for the good work they have been doing in bringing this piece of legislation to this House.

Perhaps we don't realize the importance of the wonderful natural resource which is our north, the wonderful lakes and rivers that we find—grandiose, I would say—especially in the north part of Ontario. Probably we have been too complacent in the past in not addressing this particular issue. We are addressing it today in second reading format, and I hope we can get on with a good, healthy debate on this particular item that deals with the water we drink, the water, the rivers and lakes, we would very much love to enjoy ourselves in, not only bathing in the summertime or even fishing, which is also a huge sport among Ontarians, as well as people from all over the world. As a matter of fact, people come over here to really enjoy our lakes and rivers. But it's time, and I

think the minister is moving in the right direction and it's never too soon. I think this is an area that must be addressed. Negotiations, I know, keep going on, and discussions with respect to regulations—and yes, regulations are part of the bill we are dealing with now. I do hope that indeed the House can move on quickly to give direction to the minister and come up with regulations that will address the importance of our natural resource—water.

1600

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): I am pleased to just spend two minutes and comment briefly on the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act.

Interjection.

Mr. Wilson: I'm glad the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal just spoke up, because one of the criticisms I have is, you took a very cheap political shot at me last year when you issued a report criticizing the pipeline that I had put in place when we were in government—a 57-kilometre pipeline between Collingwood, Georgian Bay, and Alliston—and you guys are talking out of both sides of your mouth.

This particular law says you can't, with a few exceptions—you shouldn't and you can't, and I agree with this—divert water from one watershed to a different watershed. You're also protecting the Great Lakes basin in terms of diverting water out of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin, which is something Mike Harris did, by the way, by regulation. You're codifying it now in the act.

But I say to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, with the cheap shot of these Liberal hacks that you hired to do a report of a perfectly good project that was put together—it was the first P3 put together, and the major criticism was that we didn't let Bradford come on the pipeline. Well, I specifically told Collingwood council, who was in control of this at the time, "That's another watershed and we're not going to divert water from the Nottawasaga River watershed to the Bradford-West Gwillimbury watershed." Yet your ministry spent several pages in the report saying that because I didn't do that, it was a bad deal—because I didn't bring Bradford-West Gwillimbury and allow water to be diverted out of the Nottawasaga watershed, it was a bad deal. So you're speaking out of both sides of your mouth and I tell you, everyone should read this report—this scathing report—just to try and ruin my reputation in the area.

I tell you, Honda couldn't have expanded, with the 1,200 new jobs in Honda with the new engine plant, if we didn't have new water from Georgian Bay. The water was so bad in the Alliston aquifer that we had no other choice. We did it in an environmentally sound way, and you criticized us for it.

The Acting Speaker: Time for a response.

Hon. Ms. Broten: I know that we will have time to further debate the issue here in the Legislature, and I know that others will have time for more extensive comment with respect to a number of the fearmongering comments that have been made. Absolutely no way can

this legislation allow for the metering of homes. That is clear in the act, and I would urge my friends opposite to read the act.

I would also urge my friends in the third party to carefully read the act. It is thoughtful, it is comprehensive and it has received support from many whom I take extensive guidance from when I want to do good work in the province with respect to water protection.

Let me quote Sarah Miller, the coordinator and water policy researcher from the Canadian Environmental Law Association: "These reforms to the Ontario Water Resources Acts are long overdue. These steps will move Ontario and the Great Lakes region away from destructive water wasting practices to sound conservation practices. Living within the natural water budget given to us is crucial to sustaining water resources for current and future generations."

Dr. Rick Smith, the executive director of Environmental Defence: "Water conservation charges will ensure that commercial and industrial water takers who use water for profit will now be contributing their share to Ontario's management of our exceptional water resources. Sustainable water management is essential as we look forward to a legacy of well-protected lakes, rivers and groundwater for the future."

Support was also received from Rick Findlay, the director of the water program at Pollution Probe, and from the editorials of a number of daily papers, including the Toronto Star, and I have the Sault Star in front of me. I would urge my friends in the opposition, do not abandon Ontarians as you did when you voted against the Clean Water Act. You can't turn back the clock, but you don't need to make the same mistake twice.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to—

The Acting Speaker: Did you—

Mr. Miller: Oh, yes. Our environment critic, Laurie Scott, is away today, so I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead for today, and she'll speak another day.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

The Chair recognizes the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for reminding me to ask for that unanimous consent. I'm sure that if Laurie Scott got back and found out I had used up her hour, she wouldn't have been too happy.

It's my pleasure to speak today to Bill 198, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario's water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002, and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act.

Water is certainly our most precious resource, and I can tell you, as the representative for the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, that is made very clear to me with the beautiful lakes that we have that are so important to the economy and the quality of life in Parry Sound—

Muskoka. Of course, we have one of the natural wonders of the world, the Georgian Bay shoreline, as part of the riding as well.

The McGuinty government claims that this proposed legislation will strengthen the management, protection and conservation of the Great Lakes and all of Ontario's water resources. However, stakeholders who are concerned with the limitations of this bill argue that the proposed legislation will not accomplish its stated objectives. The bill will not properly protect our water resources because, while it proposes to ban diversions out of the basin, it will still allow for large-scale diversions between individual Great Lakes within the basin. Also, despite the enforcement of a new tax on water taken or used for industrial or commercial purposes, the bill does not strengthen or encourage the practice of water conservation.

This government has had four years to put together strong and comprehensive legislation to properly protect our Great Lakes and Ontario's water resources, but all we see with this bill is a very small first step in that direction. In fact, this bill represents a rushed attempt by Premier McGuinty to throw something together that will look good, with the fall election in mind. Ontarians want to see strong legislation that will effectively protect our precious water resources, not a last-ditch attempt by this government to develop pseudo-green election platform material.

Let me talk about the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin agreement.

The proposed legislation would implement the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement signed by Ontario, Quebec and the eight Great Lakes US states on December 13, 2005.

I would like to give some history on that. It was actually Mike Harris who signed the original Great Lakes agreement. Also, as the minister stated in her speech, the ban on diversions of water out of the basin has been in effect since 1999. It was in regulations. Their background material, which I'll quote from, says, "Subsection 1(8): This section continues a ban on transfer that has been in place in Ontario since 1999. The proposed amendments to the Ontario Water Resources Act would place that prohibition in legislation." So, just to be clear, it was the PC government of Mike Harris that put the ban on diversions out of the basin into effect in 1999.

The agreement requires each province and Great Lakes state to incorporate the terms of the agreement into its own laws. In order to accomplish this, Ontario and Quebec must amend their laws and each state must adopt the compact, committing them to the same terms as the agreement. The proposed legislation, Bill 198, will amend the current legislation in order to implement this very important agreement.

The waters of the Great Lakes basin are a valuable natural resource, and certainly I support this part of the legislation. Together, the lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands and underground waters of the basin make up a single, interconnected system. The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence

River basin is the watershed of the Great Lakes and of the St. Lawrence River upstream from Trois-Rivières, Quebec.

The Great Lakes contain 20% of the world's fresh surface water and 95% of North America's fresh surface water supply. Protecting the waters of the Great Lakes basin is an important objective that should be addressed and reflected in the laws of every one of the jurisdictions that share the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. This is especially true where we have the effects of global warming and also development in places like the southwest of the United States, putting further increased demands on our most precious resource: water.

1610

This bill also contains a water conservation tax. Bill 198 includes a proposal to charge commercial and industrial users for the water they use to help conserve, protect and sustain Ontario's water resources. The government claims that this new tax is not a tax at all, but rather a regulatory charge for water use. You can spin it any way you want, but the fact remains that the proposed water tax is just that: a water tax. I might remind the government that in the election, of course, Premier Dalton McGuinty had his famous ads where he promised not to—I think the line was that he wouldn't increase taxes, but he wouldn't decrease them either. So he did make a promise not to raise taxes. He has, of course, had the huge health tax, a very significant tax that broke that promise. This is another breaking of that promise not to bring in new taxes.

One of the stated objectives of this newly proposed tax is to provide a financial incentive for companies to practise conservation when it comes to their water use. The reality, however, is that this tax will simply provide the government with more revenue rather than really encouraging conservation. Charging water bottlers, canning companies and other heavy commercial water users \$3.71 per million litres will not work to force them to conserve water. The tax will not provide companies with a significant financial incentive to practise water conservation.

In an article published in *The Toronto Star* on April 4, Ramani Nadarajah, executive director of the Canadian Environmental Law Association, was quoted as saying, "It's not going to have a huge impact in terms of actually resulting in water conservation."

In addition to the concerns with the new water tax itself, there are also concerns among interested groups with the fact that the tax will not apply to all water users. The proposed water tax will not apply to private domestic wells or water used for domestic and other non-commercial uses on municipal supplies. The new tax will also not apply to institutions such as schools and long-term-care homes, and environmental uses such as wetlands projects or hydro power and agricultural uses will also be exempt. These exemptions have left stakeholders who will be most impacted by this new tax with feelings of disappointment as a result of the unfair treatment.

The concerns of the Canadian Bottled Water Association were published in an article in the *St. Catharines*

Standard on April 8. The bottled water association is reluctantly willing to pay for this new tax, but strongly believes that there should not be any exceptions. According to this group, all water users should be subject to the same treatment and should have to pay this new water-taking tax. That's certainly something worth considering, treating everyone the same.

I think that points to the fact that this legislation certainly should have public input and should have public consultation, so I would expect after second reading that this bill would be going to committee. I hope there will be ample opportunity for both the stakeholders affected by the new tax and others who may have concerns about the water diversions part of the bill to get their say on the bill. I'm sure there will be lots of different opinions. Hopefully this government is not going to just rush this through and have flawed legislation.

Certainly, we've seen other environmental bills, like the Endangered Species Act, where the government seems reluctant to be willing to host public hearings. As I've stated very clearly, as the critic on that bill, I'm very pleased to participate in public hearings, whether it be through constituency week or any Fridays when the Legislature isn't sitting so there can be public hearings on that Endangered Species Act.

Getting back to this bill, there is also a troubling loophole in this bill that is the cause of significant concern to many stakeholders. Even though the proposed legislation bans diversions out of the basin, it still permits large-scale diversions between individual Great Lakes within the basin.

Allowing these types of diversions to continue is dangerous because of their potential effects on the water levels of the upper Great Lakes, such as Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. Diverting water out of the upper Great Lakes and into the lower Great Lakes will work to compound the possible and projected effects of climate change. These effects will have a profound impact on Ontario, degrading ecosystems and destroying fish, bird and wildlife habitat.

While the government claims that it prohibits in-basin diversions in the proposed legislation, there are a number of exceptions to this supposed ban that are currently vague and open to wide interpretation. I can tell you, as the representative for Parry Sound-Muskoka, which contains, as I've already stated, the beautiful Georgian Bay, that we've had record low water levels on Georgian Bay, and it's a significant concern to the many communities along Georgian Bay. People who have cottages and the First Nations along the Georgian Bay coast are very concerned about the lowering water levels on Georgian Bay.

York region is currently leading the way with respect to municipal pressure for in-basin diversion opportunities, as the region currently has a big pipe proposal on the table. York region wants to draw water from Lake Simcoe and send its sewage to a treatment plant on Lake Ontario via an extension to the big pipe: a classic example of an intra-basin transfer.

An exception for York region under the proposed legislation will almost certainly open the door for other regions to follow the same path and request exceptions for intra-basin transfers of their own. Various stakeholders and interested parties, such as the Georgian Bay Association, are concerned about the long-term impacts of this big pipe proposal and the general in-basin diversion exception because of the precedent that it sets. Other municipalities will also request, and likely be awarded, exceptions under the legislation for similar in-basin transfers.

The Georgian Bay Association is made up of a volunteer group of concerned citizens who form a 23-member board of directors. Most of the work done by the Georgian Bay Association is on issues like water quality and water levels that impact everyone from the Bay of Islands in the north to Honey Harbour in the south. I've had the pleasure in the last years, pretty much once a year, of spending a day out on beautiful Georgian Bay with representatives of the executive of the Georgian Bay Association. It's my annual day on the bay, and I look forward to it and go out with them on the bay to someone's residence, where they go over all the various issues they're concerned about, most of which relate to water.

As the only organization solely devoted to the specific and distinct concerns of Georgian Bay, the Georgian Bay Association has become a vigilant watchdog on issues that could have a lasting negative impact on the unique Georgian Bay ecosystem.

The Georgian Bay Association funded the undertaking of the Baird report, which was prepared by W.F. Baird and Associates in June 2005. This report confirmed the association's water levels committee findings, which stated that ongoing erosion and shoreline alterations at the outflow of Lake Huron into the St. Clair River is increasing conveyance capacity and lowering Lakes Michigan and Huron. The Baird report found that changes for seaway navigation lowered Michigan-Huron water levels by approximately 80 centimetres. The ongoing erosion is resulting in a daily diversion of 845 million gallons.

The findings of the report were presented to the International Joint Commission, Environment Canada, shippers and agencies on both sides of the border. The IJC said that this level of work by such a small non-governmental group was unheard of. I would certainly like to congratulate the Georgian Bay Association on that important work. I don't remember the exact cost of that report—I believe it was something like \$220,000—and they did it on their own. It's been very useful. Now we need to see some action to see some remediation take place at that drain on the St. Clair River to stop the outflow of water from Lake Huron and the upper Great Lakes. The IJC has since announced that as a result of the Baird findings, it is revising its upper Great Lakes plan of study to investigate the Michigan-Huron outflow and determine the best mitigation methods. That's something that needs to be done as quickly as possible. The Baird

report and the wonderful work done by the Georgian Bay Association should change how the government monitors and manages water levels in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence water basin.

1620

In an article published in the *Toronto Star* on April 10, the concerns of the Georgian Bay Association with respect to the continued ability for water diversions within the Great Lakes and the proposed big pipe by York region were outlined. The article included the views of Mary Muter, spokesperson for the Georgian Bay Association. She's actually the vice-president of air, water and environment. Mary Muter said, "Lake Huron/Georgian Bay water levels have been close to record low levels for the past six years. We are concerned that allowing the York region transfer out of the Lake Huron/Georgian Bay basin in Ontario will set a precedent that others will follow and cumulatively will lower lake levels even further. This will result in even more dried up wetlands and loss of fish habitat."

I recently had the opportunity to hear from Ms. Muter, who informed me that the lawyers who drafted this legislation feel that proposed in-basin water transfers will be decided in the courts rather than by the legislation. Furthermore, she informed me that seven municipalities currently want to divert water from Georgian Bay to Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. If the York region big pipe proposal is allowed, the result will be a series of such proposals by other municipalities that are also interested in diversion, including Waterloo, Hamilton and London. Waterloo has already announced plans to put a water pipe into Georgian Bay, with treated sewage going into Lake Erie. London, which already has an intra-basin permit, wants another one.

By allowing for continued diversion of water between individual Great Lakes within the basin, this proposed legislation will fall short of its intended purpose. It will not ensure that healthy water levels in the Great Lakes are maintained. It will not encourage conservation and can, in the long run, lead to a series of environmental concerns, including dried-up wetlands and loss of fish habitat. If these regions were committed to a culture of conservation, then these diversions would not be necessary, as municipalities would not be facing local water shortages. Allowing for in-basin diversion will work, in fact, to discourage water conservation as municipalities will simply bring water they need from other jurisdictions with the aid of a pipe rather than work to conserve and make do with their local water supply.

Several environmental groups, including the Friends of Earth Canada, the Ontario chapter of the Sierra Club and Great Lakes United are all concerned that this legislature does not ban in-basin diversions. They are calling on the government to show some leadership on this issue and provide measures that would in fact ensure water conservation is in place. These environmental groups are asking the government to follow up with further legal measures that ban these dangerous diversions and implement mandatory conservation measures.

In the short time I have left, I'll just highlight some of the media on this bill since it has been introduced. The *Toronto Star*, Wednesday, April 4, had the headline:

"Commercial Fees for Water Use Too Low, Critics Claim;

"Environmentalists: Proposed Levy of \$3.71 per Million Litres Won't Promote Conservation."

There's a good article on the agreement in the April 10 version of the *Toronto Star*: "Great Lakes Agreement Could Spring a Leak."

On CKNX radio, AM 920: "Great Lakes Water Agreement Has Loophole." I won't have time to read the whole thing. But it states that "it allows something called intra-basin movement, which means a city in southern Ontario could take water out of Georgian Bay.

"And he says that could have a serious impact on the complexion of the Great Lakes."

Another article states: "The latest on the annex agreement: dangerous precedents. Withdrawing water from one and sending the sewage to another is proving a very attractive option to burgeoning municipalities." That's the point that I was making many times.

In conclusion, Premier McGuinty and his colleagues are not showing leadership on this issue. This bill simply represents the government's last-ditch effort to develop legislation that will provide the Premier with a pseudo-green election platform. We've had four years to develop comprehensive legislation that works to effectively protect and manage our water resources. Instead, this Premier has done nothing during his four-year mandate and is now trying, just months before a fall election, to throw together water protection legislation that, as I've already revealed, falls remarkably short of its intended objectives.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Ferreira: I'm glad to rise again and offer some brief comments to the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. I actually happened to be in his riding a couple of weeks ago, where I spoke at our party's nomination meeting. I hope we give him a good challenge in October with what I think is an excellent candidate.

He said something early in his comments which I wanted to follow up on, where he talked about this being perhaps an electioneering stunt on the part of government. I tend to agree. We have a government that is trying to reinvent itself and to colour itself green in the lead-up to an election. Certainly, this bill is just the latest in a list of them that tries to do that. I personally think it's too little, too late.

In my earlier interjection, I talked about some omissions and some difficulties we have with the legislation. I want to go back to a couple of those. The legislation is littered with some fairly vague definitions in some of the terminology that's used. Consumptive use: We're not quite sure exactly what that covers. The next speaker from the government perhaps can expand and let us know.

The bill refers to many details that will be set by regulation, such as conservation charges and the returning of water flow to the basin, which is also to be set by regulation. But there's no indication of what funding mechanisms will be put in place to fund this regulatory framework. Again, that's another glaring omission, and perhaps we'll get some more light shed on this. Perhaps the member from Parry Sound—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I listened with great interest to the speech from my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I realize he shares a particular passion for this issue, representing the riding that he does. I think all members of the House share a great passion for the environment.

Although I appreciate his comments, I don't agree with the negativity about either the bill or our government's environmental record. I think Bill 198 builds upon a very impressive record that includes measures such as the Clean Water Act, which includes our renewal of a commitment to work co-operatively with the federal government to improve and protect the Great Lakes basin; and our first biodiversity strategy, which was recently launched. I think we have a very proud record.

I want to take issue with his use of the word "tax" when it comes to the idea of charges for diverting water from the lake. I just want to go on the record to explain to those who are watching at home that the proposed charge is a regulatory charge for water use; it's not a tax. The primary purpose of the charge would be to recover a portion of the costs of the program required to manage water from commercial-industrial operations, with a secondary objective being to provide a financial incentive for companies that use water more efficiently.

This is a question of fairness. When I think of my constituents, if you said to them, "Is it fair that large commercial users should be charged in order to pay for their share of the water they take out?" I think they would recognize that that's an issue of fairness, that in essence to protect the water that's in the system to make sure that our ecosystems are preserved, we have to make sure that there is proper funding. By using this, not only will it help to fund the program, it will also provide a financial incentive for companies to regulate how much water they take out.

1630

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): Let me begin by congratulating my colleague the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. I think throughout his time here in the Legislature he has certainly demonstrated his passion for the environment and the protection of our natural resources. He has the privilege of representing a community that has some beautiful inland lakes and Georgian Bay. I appreciate the contribution that he has made since becoming the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka and his focusing on the issues that are important to people not just in his riding, but the outstanding

job he's done in making sure that the issues important to the people in Ontario are brought to the forefront.

I would agree with my colleague and certainly some of the other speakers. I think that this particular government, the Liberal McGuinty government, has a very disappointing environmental track record, and I would agree that this piece of legislation is more or less a last-ditch attempt, a last-ditch effort, to somehow try to fool the constituents in Ontario as we approach the October 10 election that it does care. I think the evidence is to the contrary, and one good indication is the fact that when you take a look at their commitment to close down the coal plants by 2007 and see that date moving further and further out, you realize that these individuals do not have any comprehensive plan whatsoever to protect the environment or to deal with the whole issue of climate change. So, again, this is an attempt, as I said, to try to fool the public into thinking otherwise.

I heard someone on the other side say that this isn't a tax, it's a regulatory charge. Well, I'm sorry, but it's all the same. I'm paying money. I would have thought that they would have learned from their health tax. They weren't going to introduce taxes, and they did.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka in response.

Mr. Miller: I'm pleased to respond to the members from York South–Weston, Kitchener Centre and Kitchener–Waterloo.

I would just like to reiterate that the issue of water diversion, particularly out of Lake Huron, is very important to me as a representative for the area that has the eastern shore of Georgian Bay, a big part of the riding. In fact, in 2004, the eastern part of Georgian Bay was named the Georgian Bay Littoral Biosphere Reserve and recognized as a globally important and national reference point. That's the near shore of the outer islands and the mainland shore through to about Highway 69/400. That was recognized by UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in 2004. So that gives you some idea of just how important this—what I view as a natural wonder of the world—is, not only to the people of Parry Sound–Muskoka but to all of Ontario and the surrounding states as well.

The member from York South–Weston said that this is an election stunt. I feel that the government seems to be rolling out a lot of green bills with the idea that the election is going to be in October and it wants to have these pieces of legislation on its election brochures. I just hope they will take the time to hear from the people who will be affected.

The member from Kitchener Centre got into whether their new tax is a tax or a regulatory fee. As the member from Kitchener–Waterloo pointed out, it doesn't really matter; it's still something that people have to pay. I should also note that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo does come up to her summer residence at Lake Manitouwabing, and has for many years, so she knows first-hand the beautiful area of Parry Sound–Muskoka.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): Legislation dealing with water is inherently important legislation, and I want to start off by talking about the context within which this legislation should be framed.

As we all know, the Great Lakes are essentially a non-renewable, finite resource. The water that's in those lakes does not turn over more than 1% per year; 99% of what's there has been there for a long time, will be there for a long time, if it is treated well, if we treat it with respect, if we treat it understanding entirely how valuable this resource is to us here in Ontario and to all of the population around the Great Lakes.

In fact, the Great Lakes hold 20% of the world's fresh water. We're extraordinarily blessed. We're extraordinarily lucky to have this resource at our doorstep. It's entirely right that this province and the states that surround the Great Lakes should come together and try to work out a method for protecting these Great Lakes from interbasin transfers. We all know—the other jurisdictions know, the people in this Legislature know, our civil service knows—that the Great Lakes are under tremendous pressure and tremendous threat, very directly, from climate change. Increased temperature means evaporation from the lakes. Increased evaporation and increased heat mean fewer ice-cover days. The reality is that Lake Superior is increasingly non-ice covered in winter. Lake Superior, the coldest, the largest of the Great Lakes, is warming up faster than the land around it, and thus the upper Great Lakes are losing more water to the atmosphere. That matters because we depend on that water being there. It's crucial to us—crucial to our economy, to our well-being, to our enjoyment of the world itself—that those lakes are healthy and well taken care of.

Indirectly, the lakes are threatened by climate change because of processes that everyone in this House is familiar with. As the climate changes, the interior of continents is heating up and the demands for water across the western and southwestern United States are growing. In the United States, large sections of the Great Plains are dependent on the Ogallala aquifer for water for household use, for cattle, for agriculture, and that aquifer is depleting rapidly. There are proposals in the United States that water be diverted from the Great Lakes to refill that aquifer. It's crucial for those people who depend on that aquifer; it's disastrous for us. We have to defend the Great Lakes comprehensively, thoroughly. We have to understand the political dynamics in the United States and make sure that those political dynamics operate in our interest.

There are interests in the United States talking about providing pipelines to the American southwest so that they can benefit from the water that is our birthright, a shared birthright with the millions of people who live around the Great Lakes. There are proposals to divert water from the Great Lakes to refloat, they call it, the Mississippi; to increase water flow in the Mississippi. Again, a disaster for us because we cannot replace the water that is in those lakes. When it is gone, to all intents and purposes, in our lifetimes and the lifetimes of our children, it will be gone completely.

A lot is at stake here. A lot is at stake here in terms of transportation. We already run into situations where low water levels affect lake freighters. Moving goods and people by water is highly energy efficient. We're affected because low lake levels and low water flow affect hydroelectricity. We're very dependent on hydroelectricity. It's crucial to our development of renewable power. For us, we have to maintain those lake levels; we have to maintain the health of those lakes.

To have an agreement with the American states around protection of the Great Lakes is for our advantage and, in part, the bill addresses that. But there are weaknesses. There are loopholes in the bill that I would ask the Minister of the Environment to plug when this bill goes to committee, because there is an opportunity here to actually deal with fundamental problems, to safeguard the Great Lakes in a way that the bill does not currently provide.

I'm going to go through what's in this bill. The province is proposing to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act as well as making some amendments to water-taking and transfer regulations under the Ontario Water Resources Act. The purpose of the act is stated, "to provide for the conservation, protection and management of Ontario's waters and for their efficient and sustainable use, in order to promote Ontario's long-term environmental, social and economic well-being." I don't know if anyone can argue with that. It's pretty straightforward. We need the protection, and this act purports to provide it.

1640

The weaknesses in the act start with definitions: "Consumptive use ... the portion that is not ... returned to that basin." I'll come back to that again in my comments.

This is the problem we've had with a number of acts that have been brought forward to this House by the Liberal government on water. When we went through the Clean Water Act, we had a variety of undefined terms that were central to the power of that bill, central to the power of that act, and yet definitions weren't provided. All of that was left to regulation, so that we, as legislators, didn't have an effective say on what ultimately was going to be in place. We had to write a blank cheque. Again, in this bill we are given vague definitions that are problematic for people trying to make a decision and frankly problematic for the public trying to understand what we're doing or not doing with regard to the protection of the Great Lakes.

The act speaks to water taking, well, surface source, diversion, storage of water or a combination of all three.

It has a section on the instruments that will actually be put in place to make sure the bill is able to deliver what it's supposed to deliver.

Then we start getting into the more substantive elements. It's not permitted for anyone to "take more than 50,000 litres of water on any day by any means except" with a permit, and then there are exceptions:

"1. The taking of water for domestic purposes ... by a municipal drinking water system" or "public utility." The

amount taken must be "less than 379,000 litres ... per day." Generally speaking, I think most people would support that. We know we need to have water for municipal drinking water. Public utilities are serving our interests, our purposes.

Taking of water for the "watering of livestock or poultry": Again, no one in this Legislature would argue that the agricultural sector for carrying on its normal, day-to-day operations should not have access to that water. It is part of what they need. It's a necessary ingredient or tool in actually producing what they have to produce—no argument.

"The taking of water for firefighting or other emergency purposes": fair enough.

Section 34.3 talks to the prohibition of interbasin transfers. This is the most substantial part of the bill. This is the part where we talk about setting in place the framework that we hope will safeguard our interests and the United States' so that those American states that border on the Great Lakes will see their interests protected by us and we will see our interests protected by them.

There are some exceptions. Historical interbasin transfers, which commenced prior to January 1, 1998, provided that the amount of water transferred out of the water basin does not exceed the highest amount of water transferred out of the water basin by the undertaking in any year after December 31, 1960, and before January 1, 1998.

I assume that that's been going on for a number of decades, that we have not seen a substantive deleterious effect on water supplies or water quality. I assume that at some point a member of the government will speak to that notice, to what exactly those are. I have a suspicion that it has something to do with a water transfer canal and Chicago. I could be wrong. I look forward to hearing about this.

Another exception to an interbasin transfer: by "order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council dated October 2, 1913 respecting the Greater Winnipeg water district." Who knew? Winnipeg seems a bit of a distance from Ontario, from the Great Lakes. I don't think we're going to go any distance against that.

Water in containers of 20 litres or less: fine.

"[W]ater that is necessary for the operation of a vehicle, vessel" on which the water is being transported, including water that's used for people or livestock in the vehicle or vessel: again, non-controversial.

Water incorporated in products such as beer or canned fruit: That speaks to the spirit of Ontario, I'd say. Again, I don't think there would be any opposition to that.

In addition, there will be a new exception to the interbasin prohibition for firefighting purposes to be consistent with the existing exception in the OWRA in the requirement for a permit for firefighting.

Again, this is fairly straightforward stuff. This act does not allow new, large-scale taking of water out of the Great Lakes into another basin. It respects the historical conditions that exist and allows things to go forward without generating a wide range of political fights that

would relate to eliminating or setting aside those historical agreements. There are some fairly practical things here.

Next, section 34.6: prohibition of intra-basin transfers. Place a prohibition on the diversion of water of 379,000 litres per day or greater from one Great Lake watershed to another Great Lake watershed unless the applicant meets certain criteria, which include the exception standards and is granted a permit to take water—PTTW.

Between 379,000 litres a day and 19 million litres a day: consumptive use. Nineteen million litres a day is a fair amount of water. If you're talking 100 days, you're starting to talk in the billions of litres. That's a lot of water, and at that level I have concerns. I'll get into that further as we go through the act. That's very substantial, and that's one of the problems that exist with this bill.

The bill goes on. These exceptions must meet the exception standard and ensure that the water withdrawn is returned to the source Great Lake watershed, less an allowance for consumptive use—I've already talked about the difficulty with vagueness on definition—if the taking is for a municipal drinking water system; or must meet the exception standard, except that the water withdrawn less the consumptive use may be returned to another Great Lakes watershed rather than the source watershed, provided that the applicant provides information to the director demonstrating that there is no feasible, cost-effective, environmentally sound alternative within the Great Lakes watershed to which the water will be transferred. That's including conservation of existing water supplies.

Ontario must provide notice to the other parties, the states that are around the Great Lakes, to those who have a direct interest in the amount of water that's taken out of the Great Lakes and where the water comes back, because where the water comes back has an impact on water flows, lake levels, hydro power, natural habitat, boating opportunities and commercial freight. Where the water goes is of consequence.

These requirements will apply if the taking is for a municipal drinking water system. The act allows for transfers greater than one million litres per day or greater consumptive use. We're talking about more than several billion litres of water per year if the bill as written goes ahead.

The water withdrawn shall be returned to the source Great Lakes watershed, and the applicant must provide information to the minister demonstrating that there's no feasible, cost-effective, environmentally sound alternative to the water withdrawal. The applicant must also provide information to the minister to demonstrate that the proposal satisfies the exception standard before the minister makes a decision whether or not to approve the proposal.

The proposal shall undergo regional review by the regional body, and the minister shall consider any declaration of finding made by the regional body following regional review before a decision is made to issue the permit. The exception standard proposes as per the

agreement, which set out six criteria that must be met by this permit-to-take-water applicant for proposals of new and increased intra-basin diversions of 379,000 litres per day or greater.

Again, a need for the water can't be avoided through water conservation. The amount of water is limited to reasonable quantities. All water withdrawn must be returned to the source watershed, less an allowance for consumptive use. There must be no significant adverse impact to water quantity or quality. The proposal must incorporate water conservation measures and must ensure compliance with all applicable laws—all levels of government as well as the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909.

1650

What I don't see there and what I think should concern the minister and the legislators in this House is that there's no assessment of the aggregate impact of taking several 19-million-litre-per-day withdrawals from one lake system and transferring them to another. When you start talking 19 million litres a day—let's say they come in at 18,999,999; they're just below that threshold. You start getting three, four or five of these and then you start having significant water basin transfers from one of the Great Lakes to another. That can have significant ecological impacts and it can have significant political impacts. If you're in Ohio, Michigan or New York state, and you're seeing that the water that's coming into the lakes that touch on your boundaries is being affected by Ontario, first of all, you're seeing a bad example. You're seeing that another jurisdiction is substantially affecting your water interests and you can't actually intervene. You in turn may get involved in that race to the bottom, that tragedy of the commons, where everybody tries to get as much as they can before it's gone.

That's a substantial concern with the intra-basin transfer and the lack of clarity—may I say, beyond the lack of clarity, the lack of commitment—when looking at the aggregate health of the different watersheds. That matters. That issue alone is one that should give the minister pause and should give every legislator in this House pause, because that is going to put us in a position where, if our water interests are threatened in the future, we will not be able to deal with American jurisdictions with what could be called clean hands. We will be criticized; our position will be undermined.

Just the other day in the *Toronto Star*, an article was published called "Great Lakes Agreement Could Spring a Leak." I think the commentary in this article is useful, and those who are following the debate would best be aware of what's been said. It's by Tim Morris:

"Last week, Ontario's government introduced legislation in support of a regional agreement to oversee large-scale water use in the region. Significantly, the regional agreement prohibits siphoning Great Lakes water to thirsty regions in the American southwest."

We all have common interests there. We all understand the importance of that. We all understand the consequences of failing to protect that diversion to the southwest.

"Known as the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Sustainable Water Resources Agreement, the pact is between Ontario, Quebec and the eight US Great Lakes' states"—a fairly powerful political grouping, one that has common interests and one that I think has to be held together by Ontario taking a leadership position.

"This is an important piece of legislation"—no question. If you have legislation dealing with the centre-piece of the environment for a big chunk of Ontario's population and a big chunk of Ontario's economy, there's no question it's important. "Preventing long-range diversions out of the Great Lakes basin is critical for the protection of the lakes and their dependent ecosystems."

"But there is a worrying loophole: Even though the proposed legislation bans diversions out of the basin, it still permits large-scale diversions between individual Great Lakes within the basin." That's a loophole this government needs to plug. This is a loophole that a government saying it is a protector of the Great Lakes needs to take action on.

"One proposal of this type"—an intra-basin transfer; in this case we're talking about taking the waters from Lake Huron and Georgian Bay and transferring them to the sprawl north of Toronto and transferring that water in turn to Lake Ontario—"is already in the works and several others could follow."

Nineteen million litres a day: Remember, it adds up. We're not talking about one transfer; we're talking about a series of diversions from the upper Great Lakes that can affect Lake St. Clair, Lake Erie, a hydroelectric dam, hydroelectric production at Niagara. This is consequential to our economy, our ecology, our environmental well-being.

Tim Morris continues: "Allowing these types of diversions to proceed is dangerous given their potential impacts on water levels of the upper Great Lakes, such as Lake Huron/Georgian Bay."

"We already know about predictions that global warming will cause a substantial drop in Great Lakes water levels, especially the levels of Lake Huron/Georgian Bay."

Some of the predictions—and I'm leaving the article aside for the moment—that were made in the late 1990s, when we were looking at predictions of lower levels of climate change, were talking about Lake Ontario's shoreline going out about half a kilometre from the shoreline that we have now here in Toronto; Lake Erie, the shoreline going out half a kilometre to a kilometre. We're talking about very substantial changes in shoreline, we're talking about very substantial changes in wetland habitat, we're talking about very substantial changes that will affect the quality of water that's available to us for drinking, for leisure, for our economy. What we have now is an act that does not take that into account, but that would actually facilitate the reduction in availability of water in the upper Great Lakes, in Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie.

"Diverting water out of the upper Great Lakes Into the lower Great Lakes will only compound the effects of

climate change and these effects will have profound impacts for Ontario's environment and economy, degrading ecosystems, destroying fish, bird and wildlife habitat, and costing billions in lost shipping, hydropower generation, and industrial production."

So the question I have for the government: In putting forward this legislation, in assessing how we will deal with these intra-basin transfers, has the government looked at the cost? Has it looked at the impacts on those lakes and on our economy when it contemplates allowing exceptions, saying that they won't allow the transfer of water if in fact it can't be proven that the transfer of water is cost-effective etc? Do they take into account the larger economic cost of transferring that 19 million litres a day out of the upper Great Lakes into Lake Ontario? I think that as we go through this legislation, that point should be addressed by the government, because if we're talking one, two, three, four, five, maybe 100 million litres a day—that would be five of these pipelines at that limit—we're starting to talk consequences for the lakes.

"The Ontario government says it prohibits in-basin diversions in the proposed legislation but there are a number of exceptions to the ban.

"The devil is in the details and currently these exceptions are vague and open to wide interpretation."

So it isn't just myself and my colleague Mr. Ferreira; it isn't just the official opposition that has questions about what actually will be in the details and questions about the vagueness, the specificity of this act.

"An example of an in-basin diversion is the current proposal by the regional municipality of York, which has told the public that it meets the exception standard."

Well, I find that extraordinarily convenient, because the reality is that sprawl continues, sprawl requires water, sprawl requires a place to dump water.

It's interesting to me, a number of years ago I saw the film *Chinatown* by Roman Polanski. That film was a fictionalized account of how Los Angeles diverted water from the agricultural areas around it so that the city itself could grow. You may remember that the impact of those water diversions on the local farms was staggering—staggering. The film is an exploration of how one traces the water, who benefits from the water, and who loses when the water is diverted to a new home—a fictionalized account, but an interesting picture of what happens when people start to play around with water supplies and the forces and issues and interests that are in play.

1700

Mr. Morris goes on: "York region wants to build a big pipe to divert waste water from growing communities in the Lake Huron-Georgian Bay watershed to Lake Ontario. For Lake Huron-Georgian Bay, the impacts of the in-basin diversion would be just as harmful as if the water was being diverted outside the Great Lakes basin."

Absolutely right. If you have a cottage on Georgian Bay, if you're in a small town on Georgian Bay and you find that the shore is moving out, if you're running a marina, you're going to notice it. If it went to the southwestern United States, it would have the same effect

as having it go to Newmarket, Aurora or Holland Land- ing and then ultimately going to Lake Ontario. You will be hit.

So again I say to the government, when it brings this bill forward to committee, as I expect it will, it has to look at this question and answer: How will it deal with the aggregate impact of multiple withdrawals? Will it act against sprawl that will ultimately affect the health of the upper Great Lakes or will it not, and will it address it in this bill?

"Mary Muter"—and, Mary, if you're watching, I hope I didn't mispronounce your name too badly—"spokes- person for the Georgian Bay Association, a citizen-based group that works on protecting the waters of Georgian Bay and Lake Huron, is concerned by the potential im- pacts of the York region proposal.

"Lake Huron/Georgian Bay water levels have been close to record low levels for the past six years. We are concerned that allowing the York region transfer out of the Lake Huron/Georgian Bay basin in Ontario will set a precedent that others will follow and cumulatively will lower lake levels even further. This will result in even more dried up wetlands and loss of fish habitat," Muter says."

Who would argue with this citizen? Who would argue with the association she represents? If she sees dropping lake levels, if she sees a six-year low—and I'll speak a bit to that later—why are we not ensuring that we do everything to protect those water levels?

Again, to the extent that within our jurisdiction we lower the lake levels that affect American jurisdictions, we undermine their political commitment to the agree- ment that we have to have. Our hands have to be clean on this. Our hands have to be shown to be doing the good work, not the destructive work.

Mr. Morris goes on to say, "There is a more sustain- able alternative for York region.

"It could build a local sewage treatment plant within the Lake Huron-Georgian Bay watershed so that no water would need to be diverted.

"But York region"—now, this is interesting—"says it is cheaper for it to flush Lake Huron/Georgian Bay water down to an existing treatment plant on Lake Ontario."

I've got to tell you right now, I bet they're probably right. I don't have any doubt that it's cheaper. I think they've probably been quite honest with us all. For them, it's substantially cheaper, but for the communities in Georgian Bay, Lake Huron, Lake St. Clair, Lake Erie, along the Niagara River, it isn't cheaper for them. It's going to be more expensive for them. It's going to have an economic impact which is of consequence. It's going to have an environmental impact which is of conse- quence. What it says to me is that if this bill is not pro- tecting the upper Great Lakes, this bill ultimately will lead to undermining the protection of the Great Lakes as a whole.

"If the York proposal succeeds, it will be difficult to turn off the leaky tap;"—not a bad analogy—"several municipalities are considering diversions, including

Waterloo, Hamilton, and London.” I don’t know why Hamilton, to tell you the truth. You’d think they’re right on the lake, but nonetheless. “Waterloo says it needs to divert water from Lake Huron-Georgian Bay because it is running out of local water supplies.”

That’s three. I don’t know if those will go through, but let’s say all three. Let’s say York is successful and Waterloo comes to the provincial government and says, “Well, you let York do it. We need to do it. What are we, chopped liver? What about us?” What if London comes and says, “You know, you used to like London. You used to like our jurisdiction. You gave it to York. Why not to us?” I came from Hamilton. It’s a good city. I don’t think the good citizens of Hamilton would be quiet if someone else was getting a great deal on water and they weren’t.

So let’s say that’s York, Waterloo, Hamilton, London. You’re talking about four times—you’re getting up to 75 million litres a day. You’re talking impact. So when we look at this situation, we know that once that tap is turned on, it’s exceedingly difficult to turn it off.

I’m not suggesting that the experience of the Aral Sea is going to be replicated here, because I think too many people depend on the water of the Great Lakes. But it’s an interesting parable. In fact, in the old Soviet Union, the Aral Sea was a thriving inland body of water that had a very sophisticated, rich fishing industry that supported a thriving economy, and all the water that used to supply that inland sea was diverted for growing cotton, for irrigation. Politically, it was impossible to turn off the tap once the spigot had been turned. That’s it. It was over. What we should learn from their experience is that turning on that tap, allowing that drain to happen, means that you are committed to something that you may never be able to reverse, and its impact on all of us can be quite substantial.

Mr. Morris goes on to say these places like Waterloo can say that they’re running out of—did he say Waterloo? Yes, he did. He says that, yes, they are facing water difficulties. He says, “This would not be the case if the region were committed to a culture of conservation.” I honestly don’t know what the policies and programs are in Waterloo, but I’ll accept what he has to say for the moment.

I think this is, without a doubt, correct: “Water users in the Great Lakes basin are some of the most profligate in the world.” Do we have a provincial program for water conservation? When we debated the Clean Water Act, did we include water conservation as one of the goals, one of the tasks that the conservation authorities had to carry through on? We did not. The NDP put forward that motion to include water conservation as one of the tasks, one of the goals of the Clean Water Act, and that was turned down. In this act today, we see no commitment to water conservation programs, no announcement of action on water conservation, no action to take the steps that would make these diversions unnecessary.

He goes on: “But allowing in-basin diversions discourages water conservation instead of conserving. Municipalities will just pipe in water from elsewhere.”

Absolutely true. If you can pipe it in from elsewhere and then dump it in Lake Ontario, why would you spend money on water conservation?

“Banning in-basin diversions would send a clear message to municipalities that they have to do a much better job of saving their water supplies.” It would change the economics. We wouldn’t have York region saying, “Man, it’s a lot cheaper for us to dump our sewage in Lake Ontario rather than cleaning the water we use and returning it to the basin we took it from.” It would change the economics, and it would protect our interests.

“Friends of the Earth Canada has consistently campaigned for improved water management in the region.

“It promotes an approach that relies less on large engineering solutions and more on effective conservation to stay within natural hydrological limits.

“Christine Elwell, senior campaigner for FOEC, explains: ‘There is clearly no need for these invasive transfers given the unlocked potential of water conservation and better land-use planning to provide for more sustainable alternatives.’

“If Ontario allows in-basin diversions, there is also a danger that this will give US jurisdictions a reason to approve more diversions out of the basin.

“It would be hypocritical of Ontario to divert water over hundreds of kilometres between Great Lakes because its geographical advantage allows it to benefit from this loophole, while telling US jurisdictions they cannot transport water from one end of town to the other because these communities straddle the edge of the basin,” says Dan McDermott, director of the Ontario chapter of Sierra Club.”

1710

Dan is right. He was there at the announcement made by the minister. Dan spoke to the press. He said, “Yes, I think it’s a good thing that we’re taking action on inter-basin transfers, but I’m profoundly worried about intra-basin transfers, the impact they have ecologically immediately and the political impact.”

“So the legislation,” Mr. Morris says, “while a step in the right direction, needs to be followed up by further legal measures that ban these dangerous diversions and implement mandatory conservation measures.

“This is a view shared by Derek Stack, executive director of Great Lakes United, a coalition of groups dedicated to preserving and restoring the Great Lakes ecosystem.

“He is calling on the province to show leadership ‘by banning Great Lakes diversions in Ontario.’ As a first step, he envisages ‘a moratorium on all in-basin diversions.’”

Tim Morris, who wrote this article, is national water campaigner for the Sierra Club of Canada. I have to say that Mr. Morris has done a great service. He’s done an analysis of the bill. He’s looked at what is useful and identified, in part, one of the great problems with the bill: the interbasin transfers.

Before I go on to the other issues with the bill, I want to talk about what is happening in Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. Great Lakes United put out a press release last fall about a funding announcement by the federal government for an upper lakes study of water levels. They note that "Water levels in Lake Michigan and Lake Huron are largely impacted by increasing flow of water out of those lakes. In the 1960s, the US and Canadian governments contracted with the US Army Corps of Engineers to dredge a shipping channel in the St. Clair River but the corps neglected to build mitigating structures to prevent resulting erosion despite commitments and assigned monies. It is clear the St. Clair section of the seaway channel is eroding thereby increasing flows downstream and impacting the water levels upstream in Lakes Michigan and Huron."

So there are already substantial pressures on Lake Huron, Lake Michigan and Georgian Bay. They're there. It's our duty not to add to those. And you should know that within the American states there is tremendous pressure to draw off that water.

The National Wildlife Federation, in a piece talking about the need for this agreement, listed some of the local water shortages around the Great Lakes. The Lower Fox River watershed in Wisconsin and growth in cities such as Green Bay are raising concerns about future water supplies. Chicago, Illinois: Suburban growth around the city of Chicago is outstripping available water supplies. Northwestern Ohio: Large-scale dairy farms are impacting nearby homeowner wells. Rochester, New York: Expanding water infrastructure is raising concern on future water supplies due to urban growth and drought.

The reality is that our southern neighbours are engaged, like us in some ways, in a water rush. To the extent that we undermine our political standing and our moral grounds for objecting to their water rush, we undermine protection of what is vital to us in this province, in this community.

I want to add to some of the comments about shortcomings in the bill, going back again to the question of definitions. "Consumptive use" has been defined as any portion of the water not returned to a basin through evaporation, incorporation in a product or any other process. There is no definition of "consumptive use" with respect to diversions. That could mean removal from the watershed alone or the water that was used from that removal. For instance, if 50 million litres were removed from a watershed and only five million were consumed, which is the consumptive use? For the Ministry of the Environment, that definition needs to be clarified so that when we go to committee and we go through this debate, we know what we're voting on.

This whole question of demonstrating feasibility for water transfers—the quote here says that it has been demonstrated that conservation of existing water supplies is not a feasible, environmentally sound and cost-effective alternative. That's one of the criteria you have to meet for having one of these intra-basin transfers. So who's determining the feasibility? Will it be an authority

internal to the ministry? Will there be an external authority that will be looking at this feasibility? What's the standard or benchmark for feasibility? In my mind, if you're taking part in a transfer that substantially lowers the lake level or has the potential to lower a lake level, that's not feasible, even if you, a developer or a municipality, conclude that for you it's extraordinary feasible to take that water and dump the waste into Lake Ontario.

Many of the details in this bill are still left to be set by regulation. Conservation charges are to be set by regulation; return flows to basins are to be set by regulation—talking about quantity. There are some omissions from the bill. There's no guideline for the quality of water that's to be returned to the basin. Let's say you take that water and you use it in an industrial process and what you're returning may not be toxic but silty, contaminated with fine particles. It doesn't have to be really grim, but are we saying that the water that's taken in has to be returned in at least as good a condition as it was found? Not said. No mention in this act about adaptation of our water regime to climate change. This is a problem that I've found in other operations of this government. During estimates, I had the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal speak about his budget and how he approached the \$30 billion to \$100 billion worth of infrastructure that Ontario is going to have to carry out over the next few decades, and I asked him directly, "What are you doing with these mammoth investments?" What are you doing to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases? Are you making sure that every courthouse you build, every school you fund, every hospital that you underwrite is built at the highest level of efficiency so that its impact on our atmosphere is minimized? No. It's not part of the guidelines or directions. Do you make sure that every road, every bridge, every wharf, every structure that has to withstand the weather is built for the climate conditions that are coming at us, rather than the climate conditions that prevailed 30 years ago? No.

I have to say that part of what I found extraordinary about that is that the World Bank, which is not particularly known as a progressive, cutting-edge institution—it's pretty stodgy, pretty conservative—in fact has set out guidelines for all of the development projects it funds, because it knows that what's coming could wash away those investments, just as Finch Avenue was washed away a few years ago, just as the member from Peterborough saw the flooding in his city. Is our infrastructure ready for that? No, the old infrastructure isn't ready. It can't be; it wasn't designed for it. But is our new infrastructure being designed to withstand the downpours, the droughts and the heat waves? There are different things you have to do as an engineer for those different conditions. I'm not talking about high-cost stuff. I'm just saying when you engineer it, engineer it so that it can withstand the change. That is something that should be incorporated in our guidelines. It doesn't have to be legislative. The government can do it on its own hook. In this act, when we talk about water and the regime that we have for managing water, we have to understand the

water situation we're going to face in the next few decades. That should be recognized in the act. It wouldn't be a big amendment, but that should be taken into account in all planning to deal with water.

1720

There's no mention of standards for consumptive use and no indication of how average consumption will be calculated. Will it be across an industry? Across a region? It's a detail, but sometimes those details can be quite important, quite substantial when you get down to a practical proposal to deal with a problem.

There's no indication of a funding structure for the implementation of this framework—and we'll get into the water charges shortly.

I would say that when you look at the bill, the diversions out of basin are prohibited but large-scale diversions between lake watersheds aren't. That's a problem. It sets a precedent for approval of future interbasin transfers; I've talked about that. Because of those interbasin transfers, water conservation is not assisted, and it may well be undermined.

One of the leading examples of this problem is the big pipe. That whole sewage and wastewater system should have been subjected to a full environmental assessment, because even before this act was brought forward, there's no question that it had environmental consequences. The cumulative impact of that diversion, the cumulative impact of the de-watering of the Oak Ridges moraine, should have been assessed. We're already seeing negative impacts on the streams and tributaries that flow into the Rouge and Humber rivers. We're seeing that the flows going to the tributaries have not come back in the way that they were predicted to come back. Those who pushed through the pipe said, "Everything will be fine. We'll de-water, we'll put the pipe in, and then it'll all come back." That's not happening.

One thing that's very important and that speaks to the whole sprawl agenda is that part of the big pipe involves expansion to Holland Landing and Sharon. That expansion means more sprawl. It feeds more climate change; it feeds more greenhouse gas emission. By making sure that we provide water on an easy-as-you-go, low-down-payment, more-to-come basis, we are undermining the other environmental goals that people in this province expect us to reach.

We are seeing a lot of pressures on water aside from what's addressed directly in this bill, but I think they have to be taken into account because when you put forward a bill, when you implement legislation, you have to take into account all the other contextual elements. Toronto and Region Conservation Authority recently did a Rouge watershed strategy, and they found that urban development in the Rouge watershed was degrading water quality and increasing flooding and erosion risks, even with best management practices. We are doing more damage through sprawl than simply polluting our air; we are damaging water sources and our rivers.

We know that those river valleys are incredibly sensitive. Toronto is a city that has many river valleys.

They're very important in terms of leisure; they're very important in terms of water management. When we expand hard surfaces, when we reduce the amount of grass and the amount of forest, when we build sprawl rather than intensify urban areas, we change the flow of water and the temperature of water going into those river valleys. That undermines local ecological diversity. We change the water temperature. Species are driven out of existence. That is of consequence to us. So when we're talking about a water bill to protect all of the Great Lakes, let's not forget the need to protect local water sources, local water issues.

I want to talk about the water conservation charges. No surprise to you and no surprise to others, the NDP has supported water charges. We think that the Liberal promise made in 2003 should have been fulfilled earlier. We agree with the exemption for agricultural uses, we don't think there should be a charge for hydro power uses, but what we do need is a system of water charges that will actually pay for the steps necessary to protect the water resources that we depend on. When we talk about the importance of the Great Lakes, the rivers and the groundwater in Ontario, we know that without those resources we're in deep trouble.

It was interesting to me in the course of the Clean Water Act hearings—and the member from Peterborough was there—asking some farmers what would happen if the water they depended on for their agricultural operations were contaminated to the point where it couldn't be used or simply extracted to the point where it wasn't available to them. They know what it means. It means the end, shutters, closure, gone.

So we do need to protect our water sources and we need to have a source of income to protect them. And \$3.71 per million litres is going to generate, we've been told, \$18 million a year, essentially the cost of administration—not the cost of a water conservation program, not the cost of water quality protection, not the cost of water quality surveillance. It is not going to make a financial difference at that end and, frankly, at the other end it's not going to change anyone's practices when it comes to taking water. It's just too little—\$3.71 per million litres. I think it's a fabulous deal if you can get it, but it ain't going to change what needs to be changed.

The other thing that I found very interesting at the press conference given by the Minister of the Environment is that in fact no one will actually pay until 2009. So this is perfect: You get to announce it in 2007 and get green points, but you don't actually charge until 2009, so no one gets cranky until midway through the next term, if you're successful. I see the political utility but I don't see the ecological utility.

During the debate on the Clean Water Act, during the period when the Clean Water Act was introduced, this conservation charge could have been introduced then. I have to say that I find it ironic that in the course of debating the Clean Water Act, I proposed that water conservation be incorporated into the duties that were to be carried out by those source water protection agen-

cies—off the books, not accepted, set aside. Something that could have been put in place and could have been effective by now wasn't, yet we're having tremendous claims for virtue in environmental protection by bringing something in just before an election that won't take effect for two years down the road. I don't think that's good environmental policy.

When the minister first introduced this bill, my comments in the House were not complimentary. I have to say to the minister and the parliamentary assistant that it's not that I think it's a bad thing to try to stop the water diversions outside the Great Lakes basin. But I find a frustration with the legislation that comes before us in the environmental field because regularly what we see, and we see again in this bill, is vagueness in definition; a leaving of large amounts of the bill—in fact, substantial operative phrases, clauses, sections—to regulation; a lack of funding; and ultimately, in my mind, thus a lack of commitment.

This came up when we went through the Clean Water Act. I asked conservation authority after conservation authority if they could afford to actually implement source water protection with the resources that they had at hand. They were very, very clear with me: They said no. So if we're talking about protecting the environment, you have to have before the legislators—us, the people in this chamber—specific definitions. You have to have clarity in what's being done, you have to have resources and you have to have authority.

1730

I'm going to wind up. I won't even go to the full 60 minutes. I want to say that a bill is necessary. This bill needs work. Its loopholes need to be plugged. The government has to recognize that it's playing with fire when it does something that harms the water resources that the other signatories to this Great Lakes agreement are going to depend on, and when Michigan, Ohio and New York are unhappy that we're affecting Lake Huron, Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair, when we're affecting the hydroelectric output at Niagara, we're going to have difficulty mobilizing them for what is going to be the very difficult task ahead, and that is to stop other American interests from grabbing as much of that Great Lakes water as they can possibly get because they are going to be dealing with profound ecological problems in their jurisdictions.

They have used their water far beyond their means. They have mined the aquifers that their agriculture depends on. They have taken steps that frankly aren't that different from ours. Because they're deeper into the continent, because they're further south and thus it's hotter, they've taken steps that are going to put them in a real jam in the years to come.

We have to protect our water. If we continue to pursue a strategy of sprawl, notwithstanding a greenbelt that is leapfrogged over for development in south Simcoe, a greenbelt that's leapfrogged over so that water can be piped here, there and everywhere to feed growth, notwithstanding any statements against sprawl, any statements about trying to ensure that we have a sustainable

community in southern Ontario, we're going to find ourselves in deep trouble.

To the government, to the minister: Take this bill to committee. Before you go to committee, look at the loopholes that have been pointed out by other environmental groups, not just by my comments here in the Legislature, and plug those loopholes because this, in the next month or so, will be your last shot. I don't know what's going to happen in the election, but the only thing that is certain about any government is that it exists up to an election and then all bets are off. If you want to leave a legacy for us, those of us here, our families and our kids, make sure that this act actually protects the Great Lakes and protects the long-term environmental and economic interests of people in this province.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Leal: At the onset of my two minutes, I'd like to recognize the member from Toronto–Danforth, who provided a very thoughtful presentation today on Bill 198.

Certainly we understand that Bill 198 is about Ontarians finally understanding the consequences of turning on the tap. We're just now at second reading stage of the bill. There will be the opportunity to take this bill to committee and an opportunity to discuss it further at committee and look at a series of amendments that will be needed for any piece of legislation. I look at the Clean Water Act; that was amended over 100 times. Those 100 amendments reflected detailed and thoughtful presentations that were made at committee hearings across Ontario.

But I must say that the issue of intra-basin transfers is a very important issue. The government has been engaging a stakeholder advisory panel in developing the proposed legislation and has responded to requests by some members for stronger restrictions on transfers between the five Great Lakes and the watersheds in a number of ways. The draft legislation was modified to authorize stronger intra-basin transfer controls by regulation, for example. The bill does provide regulation-making authority to lower the threshold, required return to the water source, the Great Lakes watershed, and to introduce additional environmental criteria to respond to cumulative impacts and climate change effects.

It may be that through the committee process we'll hear representations that will certainly allow us to make further amendments to this particular area. We recognize that this is a very important issue. It's something that has been highlighted not only by the member here but others who have made comments on the introduction of Bill 198.

Mr. Wilson: I want to compliment the member for Toronto–Danforth for his excellent comments. I agree with most of what he said, and I particularly appreciate the comments he made at the end of his remarks today, talking about the leapfrog effect of the greenbelt into south Simcoe. We have tremendous water pressures in south Simcoe, so much so that we ran a pipeline—I said

this in my last two-minute hit—from Collingwood to Alliston to bring clean water to Alliston. My mother and her friends always say that now they don't have to shine the dishes after they come out of the dishwasher because the water is so much better.

In fact, under the NDP, rather than allow us to do a pipeline, we built Ontario's most expensive well in Beeton, called the McKelvey well. When I was energy minister, I remember being out in Alberta and they said, "Wilson, how could you in Ontario know anything about flare gas?"—the gas that comes off pipelines. It's burned off. I said, "Oh no, I have flare gas in my riding. There's so much sulphur in the Alliston aquifer at Beeton that our \$8.8-million well actually has a flare gas doohicky on the roof." You go by at night and you can see the blue gas coming off, being burned off. It's now shut down because of the Collingwood–Alliston pipeline. That pipeline was in the same watershed, the Nottawasaga watershed. In fact, it basically parallels the Nottawasaga River. Water comes from Georgian Bay down to Alliston. It's consumed by the other customers along the route like Baxter, Essa township—perhaps Base Borden, Angus and other players. Of course, the Nottawasaga River then flows all the water back into Nottawasaga Bay.

But in the short time I have left, I want to remind the government that they're speaking out of both sides of their mouth. They criticized me for the pipeline and told me I should have more customers, particularly customers from other watersheds. Now this legislation pretends that they're now green and they won't allow that.

Mr. Ferreira: It's always a privilege to listen to the member for Toronto–Danforth. He's one of the leading environmental lights in this province. I thought his comments this afternoon were very articulate and provided quite a thoughtful critique of this legislation. The government would be wise to listen.

Early in his comments, he referenced the agreement that was signed between this province, eight of the US states and the province of Quebec back in 2005, the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. I think it's worthwhile to point out that that agreement is non-binding. US states do not have jurisdiction or the ability to sign, to entertain foreign agreements. Since 2005, it's useful to realize that only one of the eight states has followed through with legislation, and that's the state of Minnesota. There are two other states—I believe it's Illinois and Michigan—that are thinking of legislation in the short term, but the others have not. I asked myself, how serious are our friends in the United States about this issue and is Ontario going at it alone here? One of the reasons—and I pick this up from an Associated Press story—could be the legal implications. The story was entitled, "Turmoil Over Great Lakes Water Pact." That was the headline. I picked out this paragraph which I think is important to consider: "Some communities ... say the compact's"—and they refer to the agreement—"strict limits on water diversion could leave them high and dry. Critics fear a torrent of

lawsuits." I pose the question, what are we opening ourselves up to?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I want to tell the member opposite, the member of Toronto–Danforth, that I have the greatest of respect for the legislative process and the debate that we're having in this House. I'm encouraged by the tone that he has brought forward today, which is one that I think reflects an earnest desire to be part of this process. That is a good tone compared to ones we've heard in the past perhaps, where we were simply accused of politics and that we would never pass this bill. So we're here, we're debating the bill and we look forward to a continued debate with respect to the contents of it.

1740

I would urge him to take a second glance at the bill because he will see that a number of the concerns that he raises have been addressed in the context of the legislation. Consumptive use is defined in subsection 1(3). It's a definition that's well understood, well regarded and comes directly from article 103 of the agreement. Cumulative transfer is set out in subsection 34.6(3) and it refers specifically to article 209 of the agreement, which provides for the assessment of cumulative impact takings from the Great Lakes. Future water supply, similarly 34.6(3), referring to article 209. Thresholds, for example, are established as part of the agreement for the 10 states, and over 19 million litres in consumptive use must be returned to the source watershed, and it's specifically set out in the bill.

With respect to the conservation charges, I think it is imperative that the member opposite take a look at the water conservation charges proposal, which is posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights, 010-162 posting, for 60 days of comment period, and it sets out in very extensive detail how we would propose to move forward with a regulatory charge, something that has never happened before in the province.

My last point is, I look forward to continued debate and hearing more.

The Acting Speaker: The time for questions and comments is over. The Chair recognizes the member for Toronto–Danforth for response.

Mr. Tabuns: My appreciation to all the members who commented—the members for Peterborough, Simcoe–Grey and York South–Weston, and the Minister of the Environment.

I appreciate the comments from the member for Peterborough. I look forward to seeing what amendments are brought forward and seeing, in fact, what their fate is when they're actually put on the table.

In response to the Minister of the Environment, I have to say that I have found that when I approach these things in a constructive way, as I did with the Clean Water Act in my first week or two here, nonetheless the crucial amendments that I felt needed to be adopted were set aside. Conservation was not included. Incorporation of the need for permit taking, which was originally put forward, was set aside. The bill was weakened. Incorporation of the precautionary principle, which generally was

seen as something that needed to be in the act, was set aside. So I don't have tremendous hope in simply a constructive or reasoned approach getting us somewhere. We will see what happens with this bill.

I hope that the minister actually considers all of the matters that I've put forward: the need to have clean hands, the need to deal with intra-basin transfers, the need to make sure that when we set up a water regulation regime we take into account the changed world that we are in today and the changed world we will be in in the next two, three, four, five decades. Failure to actually do that means that this bill will not deliver what the people of Ontario require, will lead to acrimony and debate because we legislators—this legislator—will feel frustrated that the environment is not being protected. Madam Minister, we look forward to seeing whether you actually produce the goods in committee. If you don't—raucous debates.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on the debate today. I want to start off by congratulating the minister for bringing forward this bill. Its first reading was just a few days ago, April 3, and here we are, April 12, already doing second reading. This bill, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario's water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act, I think is probably one of the more important bills that we'll be debating in the next few weeks because every day now we hear, on the news and on the television, the importance of the environment, the importance of our planet and how delicate the balance is becoming. Many of us are familiar with the recent movie, narrated by Al Gore, that was done in the United States, *An Inconvenient Truth*. I had an opportunity to watch it and also to just do my own reading and observe some of the changes that are happening on the planet. The changes, although they may seem subtle, are quite serious. We as legislators have a responsibility to try to keep our planet as safe and as clean as possible.

An interesting little anecdote or side point they were pointing out in one program was that a certain type of whale that used to migrate within the warm Pacific water is now going under the North Pole cap to look for water because it needs to feed and the water there has become warm enough now to go up into that area. It has a chain reaction, because as the whales go into that area and begin eating the food and the plankton there, it results in other changes or chain reactions. As there's less plankton, there's less food for other species and so on and so forth. We've all seen those scenes on television as well of icebergs or glaciers that are collapsing, almost on a daily basis, and the seriousness of these changes which are becoming almost irreversible.

We know that the environment more than ever has become, if not the most important issue, one of the most important issues that this government can deal with. This bill in front of us today basically protects and says that

the Great Lakes water and the water that comes down the St. Lawrence basin needs to be protected. The good thing about this bill, a hallmark of our government, is that we continue to co-operate and work with others. We've put this together as an agreement with surrounding states that are also affected by the Great Lakes. We've come together to do an agreement or a charter regarding the use of the water and the transfer of the water within the Great Lakes. The agreement makes it clear that you can't just take water out of there without certain conditions being met. One of the things about this act, if approved, is that it will implement the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. This would be something unique, an agreement among Ontario and the states that touch on the Great Lakes. It allows a certain set of standards and reinforcement of basin-wide environmental standards, improved science-based decision-making, strengthening the ban on transfers out of the province's three water basins, prohibiting new and increased intra-basin transfers of water consistent with the agreement and promoting water conservation, which is something very important.

There's only so much water out there, and the population in this area, in the Great Lakes region, continues to grow—not just here in the GTA but throughout the Great Lakes area. We see large cities in the United States that are getting larger. In Ohio, you've got Cleveland on the lake. You've got other cities that are affected as well on both sides of the border. This bill recognizes the importance of that water and of having some rules in place in dealing with that water. Imagine if there weren't rules in place, what kind of situation we'd find ourselves in in the future if one of the states decided they wanted to take out so many millions of litres or gallons of water to use for certain reasons. How would it affect the water levels in those lakes and, as a result, affect the animal and plant life and other environmental conditions in those lakes?

1750

It's important to realize and to grasp the importance of this bill and why we need to debate it. Of course, as was mentioned this afternoon by one of the earlier speakers, we're in second reading right now. If second reading were to pass, this would be sent to a committee. At that committee it would be discussed further and brought back here after that and discussed for third reading. So we are beginning the debating process of what is a very important bill.

One part of this bill I wanted to talk about that I think is really important is the need to conserve, protect and sustain Ontario's water resources on behalf of all Ontarians. We've learned to conserve our electricity. When we talk about conservation, we talk about conservation in other parts. For example, let's say in a house, you think about conserving the electricity you use, or the amount of gas you use, either in your car or in the house. But we must also realize, jointly, the importance of conserving the use of water and whether or not we need to use as much water as we do.

It's the largest element on the planet. When you look at a globe, you see the size of the Pacific, the Atlantic

and the Arctic Oceans and you see how much water we have, but then you come to think of what we've done to our water in some of these places and how bad it's become, or how bad it became. Lake Erie was one example. When there weren't rules in place, Lake Erie became highly contaminated, back in the 1970s, if I'm not mistaken, or the 1960s. There was a problem also in New York state with Love Canal and all sorts of pollutants being put in the water that affected people's health.

We need to look at this really carefully and decide what type of priority we're going to give to our environment, and one important area of our environment is our water. Clean, safe, drinkable water, water available to all, is the birthright of every Ontarian and the birthright of every person on this planet. We're conserving and protecting water in this Great Lakes basin for future generations of Ontarians.

A few years ago this same government and this same Legislature passed the bill that created a greenbelt around the GTA. The purpose of that again was to conserve and protect green space around Toronto, so we wouldn't see urban sprawl. It may not be seen as being beneficial today or next week or next year, but 30, 40, 60 or 100 years from now, future generations will look back and say, "This was a thoughtful decision made by the government of the day." I think the same will be said of this bill in years to come, that it was a thoughtful decision for the minister and the government to work co-operatively with the governors of American states to bring forward a bill or an agreement that will benefit all of the different jurisdictions on both sides of the border.

There is always going to be some controversy with a bill that is brought forward. I noticed that some members of the opposition were concerned about the fact that there

was going to be a water conservation charge. When you hear the words "water conservation charge," you think, "Oh, there's the government again digging its hands into taxpayers' pockets." I think the act makes it clear that it would enable the province to charge commercial and industrial users for the water they take and use. That's only fair. Water is a resource. If you're going to use that water, then you should pay for it.

I remember my days as a Scarborough councillor. We had water meters which measured the amount of water we used in our households, and we were charged accordingly. I was surprised to find out—and I remember my friend Mr. Balkissoon, who's also from Scarborough, sort of led the fight at the time—that the city of Toronto, which amalgamated with Scarborough and the other jurisdictions, didn't have meters in its homes. People could keep taps on all the time. If you wanted to run your tap, you could run it all day and all night; you would be charged a flat rate for that. I think that in those days, when those houses were built and meters were not placed on those homes, the priority was not to protect the water.

Mr. Speaker, I just noticed that the clock has reached 6 o'clock. There's a lot more that will be said on this bill, but I'm just pointing out some of the key areas that I'm concerned about. I think it's an excellent act and, hopefully, will be an excellent law when it comes into place. There will probably be some amendments when it goes to committee, and we look forward to hearing more from the opposition on this.

The Acting Speaker: The member has made the point that it's approximately 6 p.m. of the clock. This House stands adjourned until Monday, April 16, 2007, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 157A

N° 157A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 16 April 2007

Lundi 16 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 16 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 16 avril 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Premier McGuinty and his government have so far rejected a probe into Lottogate. They have refused to launch an investigation that would give Ontarians answers about government's involvement in the scandal, that would give Ontarians answers about whether Premier McGuinty's office was involved in the cover-up.

We've asked 133 questions so far and received no answers. Dithering, dodging and deflecting have been the only responses forthcoming for three weeks. That indicates a government scared of transparency and accountability. A government that is afraid to answer for its actions is irresponsible and arrogant. The Premier and the minister consistently refuse to account for what they knew, when they knew it and what action they took.

A legislative committee empowered to call witnesses and fully investigate is necessary for the public to get the answers that McGuinty refuses to provide. The investigation could be completed by June if the Premier would only agree. Dalton McGuinty continues to hide behind the Ombudsman investigation and the OPP investigation. The Premier knows neither one will look into the Premier's office or the minister's office. This Premier talked about giving all MPPs a bigger role to play when he was campaigning for election. But now that he has won, he won't even allow a legislative committee of MPPs to examine a scandal with troubling connections to his own office.

Today we will have a motion to launch an inquiry to investigate what really happened. If Dalton McGuinty really has nothing to hide, then he should support the motion and support this inquiry.

TRASH BASH

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I would like to take a moment today to express my thanks to a very special group of volunteers who will be walking the highways and byways of my community over the next few days. I'm referring, of course, to the participants

in our annual Trash Bash event. Trash Bash, for those of you who have not heard the expression before, refers to picking up litter that is along the sides of our roads.

I've taken part myself for many years, and while at times it's hard work, it's also a great deal of fun. The increasing numbers of participants in Prince Edward county, Quinte West and Belleville bear testimony to that.

It's also a very interesting insight into our current society. I now know as a fact the most popular brand of coffee as well as the most popular cigarette in Ontario.

Our family always picks up garbage over the same stretch of road. When I say "our family," I really mean Linda and the kids, folks. The situation is getting better in my area. The first year, we picked up 43 bags of garbage within sight of our house. However, I'm thrilled to report that there is without question less and less garbage every year, and I'm proud of my community for that. People are getting the message.

For those communities that have never organized a Trash Bash, I urge you to. It does wonders to brighten up the rural areas, and you'll meet other great people. In my area, the municipalities take the garbage away and then host a reception to thank the volunteers.

So I want to conclude by saying thank you to the organizations and firms that sponsor these events, to the organizers themselves, and especially to the people who give freely of their time to make our province a better place.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): The odds of winning the 6/49 jackpot are one in 14 million; the Super 7, one in 21 million. The odds of this government responsible for the Lottogate scandal being forthcoming about their involvement in trying to cover it up are approximately one in 10 billion.

The reason we need a legislative inquiry into this scandal is because the McGuinty government refuses to answer simple and direct questions. Dodge, deflect, dither and deny is their only plan of action.

How does the Premier justify the presence of Warren Kinsella and other political fixers in meetings with the OLG? The Premier won't tell us.

What discussions took place between the office of the minister and the OLG regarding the issue of suspicious insider wins? What actions did the minister take after

April 11, 2006, when his chief of staff was informed that the CBC was looking into insider wins? He says he wasn't aware.

The people of Ontario need more than evasiveness and dismissals from the McGuinty government. They deserve a full investigation to shine a light on the government's actions. This afternoon our leader, John Tory, will address this issue in an opposition motion calling for a committee of the Legislature to look into this scandal. I hope the government members will support his motion and our ongoing efforts to uncover what Ontarians deserve—the truth—and I'm sure they'll all vote for it.

COMMUNITY LIVING GUELPH WELLINGTON

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Today I am pleased to recognize Community Living Guelph Wellington, which provides support to those who have an intellectual disability as they live, learn and work in our community.

Adult Rehabilitative Centre, or ARC, is a program of Community Living that provides employment and training to approximately 125 people. During a recent visit to ARC, the participants proudly showed me their skills: skills like building picnic tables, assembling dishwasher wheels, stuffing bulk mailings, and painting and bundling surveyor stakes.

I had the privilege that day of announcing almost \$2.3 million of new funding for Community Living Guelph Wellington from our economic stimulus package. Two million dollars will be spent on expanding and renovating the ARC workshop and building a brand new recreation centre at the ARC site for Community Living's clients. The rest of the funding will be used to renovate Community Living's group homes.

I am proud of the McGuinty government's support for developmental services in my riding of Guelph-Wellington, and I want to congratulate the exceptional team of support workers at ARC who provide a positive approach that facilitates a fun, energetic and effective workplace.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): Over the course of three weeks, we have asked 133 questions about the involvement of the Premier and the minister responsible for lotteries in the Lottogate scandal. We have received 133 dithering, dodging and deflecting responses from the McGuinty government.

Last Wednesday, the Deputy Premier defended this government's focus on a public relations strategy rather than on corrective action by stating, and I quote, "When someone like The Fifth Estate is involved in doing an exposé, of course the machinery responds. This is appropriate."

It is shameful that this government considers that it is fulfilling its duties and responsibilities by ignoring prob-

lems until the point that an exposé publicly reveals suspicious activities. If everything is above board and the machinery responded appropriately to warning signs that a scandal was occurring under your watch, why won't the Premier support our call for a legislative committee to investigate? A committee would probe into areas outside the purview of the Ombudsman and the OPP. It is the only way the people of Ontario will know with confidence what role was played by the Premier's and minister's offices. I encourage all members of this House to support our PC motion for a legislative investigation.

1340

GWEN LEE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): The Hamilton community lost a legend and a wonderful woman on April 7 with the passing of lifetime NDP and CCF supporter and activist Gwen Lee, at the age of 93. Gwen was an amazing woman who devoted her life to putting her ideals into practice for the benefit of others. This won her many awards and honours throughout her illustrious life. She was named Hamilton's Woman of the Year in 1991, earned a Senior Achievement Award in 1994, and was honoured as Senior of the Year in 1998.

Untold numbers of Hamilton seniors' groups are indebted to the efforts of this spirited and tireless trailblazer. The Gwen Lee Assisted Housing Building in Hamilton, for example, bears her name and pays tribute to Gwen's success in realizing housing for seniors. Sackville Hill Senior Centre has a room named in her honour. She helped prepare a study of transportation needs and services for disabled persons in our community. She was a superb fundraiser for the Salvation Army, the Canadian Cancer Society and many other groups.

Gwendoline Lee will be remembered for always trying to make Hamilton a better place for all. There wasn't a Labour Day Parade, an injured workers' memorial or a social justice rally of some kind where you wouldn't find Gwen Lee.

Last Friday's memorial service celebrating Gwen's life featured words from a verse typifying her inspiring and positive outlook: "If you must bury something, let it be my faults and my weaknesses. If, by chance, you wish to remember me, do it with a kind deed or a word to someone who needs you." That typifies Gwen Lee. She was a wonderful human being. We'll miss her greatly. The spirit of Gwen Lee will remain with us, as will her legacy.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I rise in the House today to discuss the McGuinty Liberals' green plan and our commitment to making Ontario a cleaner and a greener place to live.

The McGuinty Liberals have passed the Clean Water Act, which will give Ontarians the best-protected drink-

ing water in all of Canada. The McGuinty Liberals have also introduced the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act, which would strengthen Ontario's ability to protect and conserve the water of the Great Lakes and would allow charges to industrial and commercial water users. The days of giving Ontario's water away for free are now over.

Our commitment also extends to protecting Ontario's endangered species through our species-at-risk legislation. We are even building 28 more provincial parks and conservation reserves.

Our dedication to protecting the environment can also be seen in such initiatives as our greenbelt legislation that is in place to protect 1.8 million acres of ecologically sensitive land. We have also reduced our reliance on coal by one third. That's the equivalent of taking two million cars off the road.

The leader of the official opposition has criticized the McGuinty government's environmental reforms, suggesting that protecting the environment will chase jobs out of the province. We know that's not true. We on this side of the House recognize that Ontario can have both. We're working to ensure a vibrant economy alongside a much cleaner environment.

YORK SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Last week, the leader of the third party spoke against the Spadina-York subway extension. On April 11 he was quoted as saying, "We don't need another subway mega-project ... extending the subway ... into a lightly populated York region." This is a clear betrayal of public transit.

In the days since this disappointing statement, a variety of citizens and politicians from the region have contacted me to voice their support for the Spadina-York subway extension. I have in my possession a 41-page petition from members of my community pledging their support for the Spadina-York subway extension and expressing their disappointment with the comments made by the leader of the third party.

In addition, last week the Spadina-York subway extension committee, which has representatives from the city of Toronto, the city of Barrie, Vaughan, Brampton, the region of York and York University, reiterated their endorsement of the extension.

Today, the council of the city of Vaughan has before it a motion expressing its support for the subway extension. The chairman of the region of York has also indicated to us that the Spadina-York subway extension is an integral component of their long-term growth plan which will ensure the preservation of the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine.

As you can see, there is tremendous support for the Spadina-York subway extension. The leader of the third party should be ashamed of his comments, and he has once again demonstrated that the NDP is stuck in the past without a clear, workable plan to benefit the people of the region of York and Toronto.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I rise in the House today to talk our government's commitment to workers and families in northwestern Ontario. Last week, the leader of the third party talked about cancelling the York University subway line, which would have a devastating impact on the workers of Bombardier in Thunder Bay. It is reprehensible that at a time when we are facing tough economic challenges in the northwest, the leader of the NDP would jeopardize good-paying, stable employment in Thunder Bay just to score a couple of cheap political points in Toronto.

The McGuinty Liberals have made a commitment to this Toronto transit project, and we've already put the money on the table. We will continue to move forward with this plan, and we want the people of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario to know about it.

Neglectful treatment from the NDP is not a new phenomenon, however. The NDP has a record of abandoning northern Ontario. In 1995, the NDP government sneakily took \$60 million from the northern Ontario heritage fund.

Interjections.

Mr. Gravelle: Oh yes, you did, and you put it into general government revenues, weakening this important resource for the north. For our part, we've revitalized the heritage fund to provide support for economic initiatives in northwestern Ontario, from forestry to genetics to small business.

I also remember that it was the NDP who—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Timmins-James Bay, please come to order.

Member for Thunder Bay-Superior North, are you finished?

Mr. Gravelle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very difficult for the NDP to hear this, I realize.

I remember it was the NDP who slashed medical school spaces in the early 1990s, leading to a doctor shortage and increased wait times, especially in smaller—

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you. I think there's been adequate—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, the member for Timmins-James Bay—

Mr. Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I didn't have enough time.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North has had enough time. We'll now move on to reports by committees.

VISITORS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to introduce to you visitors to the members' gallery today: Mr. Kim Allen, CEO and registrar of the Professional Engineers of

Ontario; Mr. Bob Goodings, past president of the PEO; Mr. Walter Bilanski, president-elect of the PEO; Mr. David Adams, president of the Professional Engineers of Ontario for 2008-09; and Mr. Howard Brown, of Brown and Cohen. I'd like all members to give them a good hand.

I would also like to encourage all members of this Legislature to attend their reception this evening, which will take place from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Stop 33 in the Sutton Place Hotel. There are 700 engineers in each riding in Ontario. Let's show our appreciation for these great engineers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Had it not been for an invitation, I would have called that not a point of order.

The member for York South-Weston.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): I wish to draw attention in this House today to the presence of two distinguished parliamentarians from the Azores: Dr. Carlos Costa Neves, leader of the social democratic party and leader of the official opposition in the Azorean assembly; and his colleague Dr. António Pedro Costa, himself a member of the assembly and his party's critic for immigration. I ask all members to join me in welcoming these fine members.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like us to welcome Galina Bajenova and her mother, Elena Bajenova, from Richmond Hill; also George Utsin and his mother, Svetlana Utsin, from Scarborough.

Galina is a 7th-grade student at Trillium Woods Elementary Public School in Richmond Hill. I would ask us all to give her a special welcome, along with her mother and her friends.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CONSUMER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (PAYDAY LOANS), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR (PRÊTS SUR SALAIRE)

Mr. Tascona moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 205, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 with respect to payday loans / Projet de loi 205, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur en ce qui a trait aux prêts sur salaire.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): The federal government is in the process of divesting responsibility with respect to payday loan legislation, and the province will be responsible for licensing and making

sure that consumers are protected. This bill provides for a regime to deal with the definition of what a loan is, and also puts in some licensing requirements for borrowers and lenders.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, April 16, 2007, and Tuesday, April 17, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1352 to 1357.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine
Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol
Bentley, Christopher	Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldeep	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Chan, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Watson, Jim
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Craiton, Kim	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
DiNovo, Cheri	Kormos, Peter	Scott, Laurie
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ferreira, Paul	Murdoch, Bill	Tory, John
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakubuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 42; the nays are 24.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

1400

COMMODITY FUTURES LAWS REVIEW

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting the consideration of the January 2007 report of the Ontario Commodity Futures Act advisory committee.

I move that pursuant to subsection 76(5) of the Commodity Futures Act, the standing committee on finance and economic affairs be authorized to review the January 2007 report of the Ontario Commodity Futures Act advisory committee, sessional paper number 417, and that the committee be authorized to report to the House its opinion, observations and recommendations concerning amendments to the Commodity Futures Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

The motion has been moved, so I don't think you have to read it again. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

VOLUNTEERS

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I rise to recognize National Volunteer Week, which runs from April 15 to April 21. It is a great opportunity for us to applaud the work of thousands of Ontarians who donate their time and energy to volunteer activities in their community.

Each year, more than five million Ontarians volunteer to improve the quality of life for others in their communities. That's why our government is supporting and revitalizing volunteerism and volunteer organizations in Ontario.

Right now, the volunteer service awards are underway across Ontario. By the time the 45 volunteer service award ceremonies are completed in June, over 9,000 Ontarians will have received their pins of recognition this year alone.

Colleagues in this House have been invited to participate in these local events to honour their constituents for their service and commitment. I know that several members of this House accepted that invitation and have participated in the VSA ceremonies to honour their constituents.

This year, the Outstanding Achievement Award for Volunteerism was renamed in honour of June Callwood, one of Canada's most famous social justice activists, who helped create numerous social action organizations. Sadly, June Callwood passed away this weekend, but her memory lives on through the many people that she touched and the many organizations that she founded.

Her passion and her inspiring legacy to give back to our community is an example for all Ontarians.

It was my honour, two weeks ago in London, to present the first June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Volunteerism to the Friends of the Cove Subwatershed Inc., a vibrant local environmental group in London, which works to improve the quality of life in this community through the protection, rehabilitation and wise stewardship of the Coves subwatershed system in London.

And last week in Sarnia, at the volunteer service awards, Harmony for Youth was recognized. Harmony is a non-profit organization that promotes self-esteem in young people through music. The organization averages 700 youth registered in their programs each year and is run entirely by volunteers.

Both of these organizations are a testament to the kind of civic participation and incredible volunteer engagement that is found throughout the province.

Ontarians of all ages and backgrounds volunteer, and there is no area of the province that has not benefited from volunteerism.

In recognition of those who have contributed to our cultural vibrancy, our government has established a new award, called Newcomer Champion Awards, to recognize those who have enriched cultural diversity, facilitated harmony and understanding, or have helped newcomers to settle successfully in our great province.

As we all know, Ontario is the province where more than half of Canada's immigrants choose to live. We know that part of successful integration is being and feeling a part of their new home, and what better way to achieve this than through volunteering?

That is why we are opening doors to the volunteer sector for newcomers by investing more than \$547,000 to expand volunteer opportunities for newcomers through the following initiatives. First, in partnership with the Maytree Foundation, the abcGTA program is expanding to recruit, train and match candidates from diverse backgrounds to volunteer for leadership positions in agencies, boards, commissions and not-for-profit organizations. Second, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, OCASI, is developing resources to increase awareness of the importance of volunteering and increase newcomer participation in volunteerism. Third, the Catholic Immigration Centre Ottawa is developing opportunities to engage new retirees and individuals who are approaching retirement to engage in volunteerism with newcomer communities. This is a win-win situation for talented newcomers and for our voluntary organizations. It means that our increasingly diverse communities will be able to benefit from the global experience newcomers bring to volunteering.

Ontario has a rich history of volunteerism. Volunteers established organizations such as the YMCA in 1851 and the St. John Ambulance in 1877. Today's volunteers are continuing this proud tradition of giving through organizations such as Meals on Wheels and thousands of others across the province. Volunteers are compassion-

ate; they are invaluable. They embody commitment, passion and excellence, and they empower others to reach their potential. Like June Callwood, they turn idealism into action. The responsibility that Ontario's volunteers demonstrate for the well-being of their fellow citizens and for the betterment of our province must be continually recognized and nurtured. That is why I urge my colleagues to join with me during National Volunteer Week, and every week, to show Ontario's volunteers we value them greatly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all Ontario's incredible volunteers.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I rise today to share with honourable members an important announcement about the work our government is doing to preserve our province's green spaces.

J'aimerais partager aujourd'hui une nouvelle importante avec les membres de l'Assemblée sur le travail que notre gouvernement fait pour préserver les espaces verts de la province. Je suis très heureuse de faire cette annonce alors que l'Ontario commence sa célébration de la Semaine de la terre dans la semaine qui suit.

I rise today to share with the honourable members an important announcement about the work our government is doing to preserve our province's green spaces, and it gives me great pleasure to make this announcement as Ontario celebrates Earth Week next week.

Thanks to the leadership of Premier McGuinty, this government has an impressive record of protecting the environment. We have introduced tough new laws that protect our drinking water. We are producing more renewable energy and doing more to conserve electricity. And our government's award-winning growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe will ensure that growth planning is strategic for one of North America's fastest-growing regions. We are committed to strengthening our economy and fostering new growth and development, but we have made this commitment with the environment in mind. This means that we have protected 1.8 million acres as part of the green belt that stretches across southern Ontario.

Nous préservons les espaces verts de la province afin que les familles ontariennes puissent bénéficier d'un environnement naturel sain, dynamique et magnifique pour de nombreuses générations à venir.

Le gouvernement McGuinty sait qu'il y a encore beaucoup à faire pour l'environnement. Nous devons tous apporter notre contribution.

We are preserving our green spaces so that Ontario's families can rely on a healthy, vibrant and beautiful natural environment for generations to come. But the McGuinty government knows that there is more work to be done on the environment. We must all do our part.

I would like to share with the honourable members today yet another example of how we're demonstrating our environmental stewardship. Our government made yet another strong demonstration to the natural and agricultural heritage of one of North America's largest urban green spaces by providing \$2 million to the Rouge Park Alliance. Rouge Park is Canada's premier urban wilderness park. Over 11,500 acres in size, it is a protected parkland in the Rouge River, Petticoat Creek and Duffins Creek watersheds in and near Toronto.

1410

These funds, a significant \$2 million, will be dedicated to restoring lands and historical properties in the park, increasing public awareness of the park's values, and will help to provide an enjoyable and memorable experience for visitors.

Earlier today, my colleague Michael Chan, Ontario's revenue minister and MPP for Markham, made this announcement at the park in his home riding. Mr. Chan, along with our colleagues Brad Duguid and Bas Balkissoon, joined the Rouge Park Alliance and a group of local children for a tree-planting ceremony in the park. I understand that the event was very well attended by residents from the area, and everyone celebrated, despite the rain.

At the announcement this morning, Gord Weeden, chair of the Rouge alliance's board of directors, applauded the McGuinty government for its outstanding support in bringing Rouge Park closer to meeting our natural, cultural and agricultural heritage objectives.

This event at Rouge Park is part of a larger, province-wide series of events and announcements that demonstrate our government's commitment to preserving and expanding Ontario's green spaces. In all, our government has donated more than 400 acres to parks across the province over the past six months, including the Eramosa Karst in Hamilton, Hidden Valley Park in Burlington and Glenorchy Conservation Area in Oakville. In the last year alone, the McGuinty government has dedicated more than 2,000 acres of provincially owned land to Rouge Park and Bob Hunter Memorial Park, bringing the total amount of provincially owned land dedicated by the Ontario government to these parks to more than 5,500 acres.

L'an dernier seulement, le gouvernement McGuinty a offert plus de 2 000 acres de terres appartenant à la province au parc Rouge et au parc commémoratif Bob Hunter, ce qui porte à plus de 5 500 acres la superficie totale de terres appartenant à la province offertes à ces parcs par le gouvernement de l'Ontario.

The Rouge Park family is preserved as part of Ontario's 1.8-million-acre greenbelt and protects natural areas, national historic sites and green spaces that stretch from the Oak Ridges moraine to Lake Ontario. Visitors to the park enjoy hiking, camping, a beach and spectacular views, elements that will be more enjoyable thanks to today's \$2-million investment. Across Ontario we're expanding on our commitment to protect our natural green space, giving Ontarians more opportunities

to enjoy the outdoors for leisure activities, and today's investment of \$2 million in the Rouge Park Alliance strengthens that commitment.

As Ontario's Minister of the Environment I'm proud that the McGuinty government continues to demonstrate our dedication to the environment and to sustainable development. We have not just talked about why it's important to protect the environment; we continue to deliver.

En préservant les parcs et zones naturelles de l'Ontario, nous faisons de notre province un endroit où il fait mieux vivre, travailler et se divertir. L'octroi de 2 \$ millions au parc Rouge annoncé aujourd'hui par le gouvernement McGuinty nous aidera à créer un Ontario plus respectueux de l'environnement, aujourd'hui et pour de nombreuses années.

By preserving Ontario's parks and natural areas, we're making our province a better place to live, work and play. The McGuinty government's investment today of \$2 million for Rouge Park is one way our government is helping create a greener Ontario now and for years to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Statements by the ministry? Responses?

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On behalf of the leader of the official opposition, John Tory, and the PC caucus I would like to acknowledge National Volunteer Week and to pay tribute to the more than 2.5 million Ontarians who freely contribute more than 400 million hours of their personal time each year to community service and to meeting the needs of others.

Volunteering is indeed a lifeblood of our communities that allows us to participate in nurturing our environment, bringing people together in hospital corridors and schools, on playing fields and in boardrooms for good reasons and for common purposes.

Volunteering develops within us an understanding of our communities, of the needs of people, of the needs that they have that sometimes can only be met with a helping hand: people with disabilities, people in financial distress, children with special needs—and sometimes that special need may be that of a Big Brother or a Big Sister in their lives—or the elderly, who may simply need the assurance that they are not alone and that someone cares.

Volunteering allows us to give of ourselves, to share our wealth and to express our human values of community and of caring.

Today I say thank you to our outstanding organizations and their volunteers who are representative of that volunteer spirit. These volunteers mentor our children, feed our hungry, comfort our lonely, beautify our green spaces and fundraise for our charitable organizations. Ontario's volunteers are young, old, members of families, workers, retirees: men and women of all ages and of all backgrounds. They work in our hospitals, our long-term-care facilities and hospices, who give tirelessly

to improve the quality of life of those they serve. They are a part of the many service clubs of our province for their volunteer initiatives through which youth are encouraged to become the best that they can be and our communities are strengthened.

I would also like to pay tribute to one of Canada's foremost examples of the spirit of volunteerism: June Callwood, who passed away this Saturday. Saint June, as she always will be remembered, worked with over 50 social organizations and fought for countless causes throughout her life in which she demonstrated an unwavering capacity for compassion, empathy and understanding. Today, we celebrate her contribution and the contribution of many volunteers in our province.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of the Environment. We fully support the protection of green spaces so that our children and our grandchildren in urban areas have access to green spaces to enjoy the outdoors and breathe the clean air. But I would also like to note that in the minister's statement she attempted to use "Minister Caplan" and "leadership" in the same sentence, and I think we all know how ridiculous that sounds over here.

The previous PC government established some highly successful and revered policies such as the Living Legacy and the Lands for Life program as well as the Oak Ridges moraine. Extending and protecting Ontario's green spaces by this government reflects no real leadership; it's just finishing up some of the hard work that came before them, which Dalton McGuinty always loves to take credit for.

But the truth of the matter is that this Liberal government under Dalton McGuinty has failed Ontarians when it does come to the environment. It was nearly five years ago when Dalton McGuinty stood on stage after stage and made a bunch of promises to close coal plants with absolutely no plan on how to get there. The Liberals have shown their dedication to something, and that something is nothing more than environmental rhetoric. In fact, keeping up the coal-closing charade just delayed measures that could have made the environment cleaner and Ontarians healthier. Promises broken, promises re-broken and re-broken. Those plants are still spewing out the emissions that Dalton McGuinty said he would stop. Although I do believe someone over there is reading the polls, because in the last three weeks we've seen a small handful of announcements with boatloads of that all-too-familiar Liberal rhetoric on green policies.

The McGuinty solution to broken promises is to delay and defer deadlines—weak leadership. So after four years of delaying and breaking almost every election promise he made on the environment, Dalton McGuinty announces that he is going to come out with yet another plan, and this time the plan is on climate change, thanks to the funding by the federal government.

Our leader, John Tory, today showed real leadership when it comes to the environment. I was pleased to join

in when he announced setting ambitious and measurable targets that a PC government would set for the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario. He laid out a concrete plan detailing how he would show real leadership of a government that would play its part in helping to meet that goal.

Ontarians do their best work when they have a competent, accountable leadership with real plans and a real desire to be measured on real results. That's the difference between John Tory as opposed to Dalton McGuinty's lack of leadership, his "Say anything to get elected" and Dalton McGuinty's extreme lack of accountability. We can't believe them to get it right.

VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to introduce a wonderful group from a wonderful school: Ursula Franklin high school. Welcome.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): I'm pleased to respond on behalf of my party to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration's statement on National Volunteer Week. Each and every year more than five million Ontarians give generously of their time to volunteer at more than 45,000 charitable and not-for-profit organizations across the province. We salute these volunteers and the important role they play in improving the quality of life in their communities. Their selfless contributions should be applauded by us all.

This year, we are witnessing the inaugural presentation of the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism in Ontario. June Callwood, sadly, lost her battle with cancer this past weekend.

1420

Along with being a prolific writer and commentator, she was a tireless crusader for social justice and a passionate volunteer for many worthwhile causes. The positive difference she made over the course of her lifetime is immeasurable. The people of Ontario, especially the poor and disadvantaged, will forever be grateful for June Callwood's long-lasting contribution to the betterment of our province.

In the spirit of Ms. Callwood's rich and powerful legacy, thousands of my constituents, many of them new Canadians, volunteer their time on a variety of important community initiatives. I wish to highlight just three of these which are symbolic of the volunteer spirit that cuts across the age and socio-economic backgrounds of these individuals. The Syme 55-Plus Centre, which provides much-needed recreational and social programming for adults 55 and over, operates with the contribution of hundreds of volunteers each and every year. The For Youth Initiative gives young people an outlet to channel their creative talents in a productive and positive way. FYI's efforts would not be possible if not for the efforts

of a significant number of dedicated and committed volunteers. The Mount Dennis Community Association counts on dozens and dozens of volunteers for community cleanups and other activities that improve the quality of life in one of Toronto's neediest neighbourhoods. Just this past weekend, I joined a couple of dozen of those volunteers for a clean up of the Eglinton Flats ravine.

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, I commend the work of these and all volunteers across this province.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): I find it ironic to hear the comments from the Minister of the Environment today, given the threat of the big pipe to Bob Hunter Memorial Park. Because the McGuinty Liberal Party approved the big pipe, the Bob Hunter park is now a greenbelt hot spot. That big pipe was approved without a comprehensive environmental assessment. The construction that is going on there of that big pipe is de-watering the Oak Ridges moraine aquifer. That big pipe will support sprawl, and, frankly, if there had been a full environmental assessment, the proposal to put a sewer through an aquifer would have been properly examined and properly rejected. Instead, what we have is a situation where we're putting a sewer through an aquifer, an aquifer that is being drained, resulting in wells going dry, streams going dry.

If we'd had a full environmental assessment, we would have looked at the fact that this big pipe is going to facilitate sprawl across southern Ontario. In the absence of scrutiny, we're now in a situation where the big pipe is going to be tunnelled under Bob Hunter Park. All but one of the proposed routes goes through the heart of Bob's park. Now, I think that tunnelling a giant sewer through a park named after one of Canada's leading environmentalists shows a total lack of respect for the man and the work that he did in this country.

Today, the minister could have made a different announcement. She could have announced that Bob Hunter park would not be subjected to the impact of this pipe. She could have announced that she in fact was reconsidering these matters, but reconsideration, or thorough consideration, does not seem to be part of this government's and this minister's approach. When we look at the environmental assessment process, it was shelved when it came to the Portlands Energy Centre, notwithstanding the concerns of the residents, notwithstanding the concerns of the city of Toronto medical officer of health. When it came to the nuclear mega-scheme, environmental assessment was shelved, notwithstanding the fact that this will be one of the biggest construction projects in Ontario's history, with huge implications for us environmentally and economically, and no environmental assessment for incinerators—that whole process expedited. And in Bath, Ontario, the Canada Cement Lafarge proposal wasn't subject to an environmental assessment. The citizens were left to defend themselves. That shouldn't be the way it is. The minister and the ministry should defend them.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes in recognition of Yom Hashoah.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Government House Leader has asked for unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): The Holocaust is something we must never forget: the intensity of evil, the twisted ideas, the inhumane behaviour, the suffering of people who were targeted and died simply because they were a people. It seems unthinkable, yet we must think of it. We must remember all that occurred in those terrible times, and we must honour and remember the six million people of Jewish faith who were systemically killed by the Nazis. We must remember so we will never forget.

Yesterday was Yom ha-Shoah V'Hagvurah, the 27th day of Nisan in the Hebrew calendar, and Holocaust Memorial Day. It has become one of the most significant days on the calendar here at Queen's Park and in communities across Ontario and around the world. This Legislature can be proud that Ontario was the first jurisdiction outside of Israel to officially recognize this day—a day of remembrance, one on which we bear witness to the victims of the Holocaust and honour the survivors.

We are privileged that so many survivors call Ontario home, these people of great courage and dignity who brought with them all the richness of their Jewish heritage and who have contributed so much to our province as they built businesses, started families and shared their culture. Today we thank these extraordinary men and women for all they have done and all that they continue to do. It is also our responsibility and our duty to join them in remembering all those who shared their devastating experience in Europe and who lost their lives in those terrible times.

Acceptance, respect and understanding are values that define our province and values that Ontarians hold dear. Our government is diligent in protecting the rights and dignity of every citizen. Yet every year, hatred, racism and intolerance still raise their ugly heads. Last month, the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada released its 2006 Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents, an annual study on patterns of prejudice in this country. It found that anti-Semitism reached its highest levels ever reported to the league. Worldwide incidents show a similar rise. Together with the terrible atrocities in Darfur and in other parts of the world, it is clear that we must remain diligent.

Holocaust Memorial Day underscores both our duty to remember the horrors of the past and our shared responsibility in shaping the future so such horrors are never repeated. We must educate our youth about the evils of racism and the value of every culture. We must teach the values of respect and human rights. We must

refuse to be silent when we see an injustice, and stand up and speak out for one another.

We are the last generation who will be able to hear directly from the survivors and the liberators of the Holocaust. Today we hear anew their testimony. Today we remember the innocent victims. We honour the triumph of spirit of those who survived and remember those who stood against the tide of evil and risked all in the name of humanity. Today, on Yom ha-Shoah V'Hagvurah, we remember so we and the world will never forget.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): It's my privilege to join in the comments made by the minister as we commemorate the Holocaust and Holocaust remembrance.

Any event having to do with Holocaust remembrance is always a profoundly moving one. That was true yesterday as I attended the service at Earl Bales Park, which Minister Kwinter and my colleague the member for Halton also attended, among others.

My own visit, I recall very well—and there are others, I'm sure, in this assembly who have visited Yad Vashem in Jerusalem—was profoundly moving, especially the stunning room in which there was a star in the night sky for each of the six million victims of the Holocaust while a voice continuously spoke their names.

At yesterday's service, Irwin Cotler, member of Parliament and a great human rights lawyer, was quoted as saying that the Holocaust was too terrible to be believed but not too terrible to have happened. That is why it is crucially important for us to remember, to commemorate and to continue to teach.

1430

Herb Goldstein also spoke at yesterday's service at Earl Bales Park here in Toronto. He told his story as a Holocaust survivor in Montreal earlier this year and a young person came up to him after he told the story and said it would be too bad when Mr. Goldstein was gone and there would be no one to tell his story of Holocaust survival. Mr. Goldstein said to the young man, "That's why I told you the story."

The keynote speaker yesterday was Sibylle Niemoeller-von Sell, a remarkable woman who was married to Pastor Martin Niemoeller, who led strong Christian resistance to the Nazis and was personally imprisoned by Adolf Hitler, spending seven years in solitary confinement in concentration camps.

Pastor Niemoeller made the following observation about his own experience: "First they came for the Communists, but I was not a Communist, so I did not speak out. Then they came for the socialists and the trade unionists, but I was neither, so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Jews, but I was not a Jew, so I did not speak out. And when they came for me, there was no one left to speak out for me."

Therein I think lies the key in remembering and commemorating the Holocaust, in that it reminds us of our duty to be ever vigilant in the defence of civility but also steadfast in our opposition to racism and to discrimination and to hate.

We're reminded of the need for this vigilance when we see the still all too frequent acts of anti-Semitism which were just catalogued by the minister a few moments ago. And we're reminded of the need for this vigilance when we see the emergence of things like Islamophobia and anti-Muslim behaviour, which we all know are the result of misunderstanding and misrepresentation and ignorance, and in some cases the teaching of hate.

As people who have had the wonderful blessing that public life brings of getting to know people of all races and creeds and colours and religions, we have the duty to be the storytellers that Mr. Goldstein referred to, to use the horrors of the Holocaust to lead in the fight against racism and anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and all other forms of hatred and discrimination. It's one of the parts of this job that I take up with the greatest pride and enthusiasm, and I'm sure that is true of every member of this House.

Elie Wiesel perhaps articulated best that sense of determination and vigilance that we have to show in just never, ever forgetting the horrors of the Holocaust but in standing on guard as well for those most precious rights of our fellow citizens. He said the following in 1986: "I swore never to be silent whenever, wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must—at that moment—become the center of the universe."

Words to remind us all how important it is to remember the Holocaust, those who have suffered and those who have died, and to do everything we can to make sure that nothing like it ever happens again.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I am very proud to rise on behalf of our leader, Howard Hampton, and the rest of the Ontario NDP caucus to speak in remembrance of the Holocaust.

More than six million, the vast majority of the Jewish faith, lost their lives during the Holocaust. The horror they suffered at the hands of an evil regime is a permanent dark stain on the fabric of humanity. The horrific barbarism of those heinous atrocities must never be forgotten.

Approximately two decades ago, in a moment that will be permanently etched in my memory, I came face to face with a Holocaust survivor. I was among a group of two dozen or so schoolchildren on a visit to a Holocaust exhibit. The man who greeted us was about 70. He was soft-spoken but his words were powerful and poignant. He described in great detail how one day he and his family were herded into a train car at gunpoint and taken to a place that will live forever in infamy—the concentration camp at Auschwitz.

He was at the time a young man full of life and love, full of dreams and aspirations. What he lived through for

the next three years was something so unimaginable as to be a nightmare. But it was a nightmare he endured each and every day. Forced to perform backbreaking labour, he managed to survive in deplorable conditions, surrounded by the stench and taste of death. The fact he survived was a testament to his resiliency and his resolve. Sadly, he was the only member of his family to do so.

At the end of his address to us, in front of wide eyes and open mouths, he rolled up his sleeve and held up his arm, displaying a blue tattoo. It occurred to me many years later that his courageous display was an act of defiance of those who had tried in cowardice to dehumanize by branding him with a mere number.

I don't know what became of this brave man, but the recollection of my encounter with him will forever stay. As the years I go by, fewer and fewer of his fellow Holocaust survivors remain with us. While we lose them gradually, we must continue to remember so that mankind never again goes through what they went through.

To quote Elie Wiesel, a great citizen of the world, "I decided to devote my life to telling the story because I felt that having survived I owe something to the dead ... and anyone who does not remember betrays them again."

Indeed, to forget would be a betrayal to all. It would also be to let our vigilance down.

To this very day, we hear and see the hate-mongers beat their drums of denial and destruction. Too close to home, weak men of small minds use paint and vandalism to spew hatred. Far from home, a powerful man of unsound mind uses the veil of so-called "democracy" to spew venomous words.

These are dangerous men with very dangerous thoughts. To forget the Holocaust would be to give them the opportunity they crave.

That's why it is so important that each and every one of us remember the Holocaust: to ensure that the darkness and wickedness of evil can never again see the light of day.

The Deputy Speaker: Will members please rise and join me in a time of silent remembrance.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): Speaker, originally we were told the Premier was not going to be here today and then he was. Is he going to be here? My first and second questions are for him.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Chair has no idea.

Mr. Tory: I can read my notes to the appropriate minister.

My question then is to the minister responsible for lotteries and it concerns the lottery scandal—133 ques-

tions so far and not one single answer. No answer, for example, to the question surrounding the claim by this minister that he did not become aware of a lottery scandal until October 2006, despite an e-mail going to his current chief of staff, dated April 11, 2006; no explanation of the late-August meeting attended by that very same adviser, his own chief of staff; no explanation of the Deputy Premier's comments where he said, "When someone like The Fifth Estate is involved in doing an exposé, of course the machinery responds. This is appropriate," and no explanation of what the Deputy Premier meant by the machinery responding.

I'd like to just quote to you the words of your own leader, the Premier of this province, who said on a previous day, "Given the seriousness of the situation, will you agree here and now for an all-party legislative committee to get to the bottom of this matter?"

The Deputy Speaker: Question?

Mr. Tory: That's what he said on another day. Why won't you agree to a legislative committee to look into this?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I understand the partisan perspective of the member opposite. He's quite wrong in a number of the things that he stated earlier in his question, and I'm very happy to lay out the facts for him.

We've had a third party investigation by KPMG, the same accounting firm used by yourself in the private sector, used by your party. In fact, all of the recommendations by KPMG are ongoing. I directed Ontario Lottery and Gaming to implement the Ombudsman's recommendations and indeed all of the KPMG recommendations.

We've had the Ombudsman, a non-partisan, unbiased, independent officer of this Legislature, do a very broad and thorough investigation. I've instructed that all of the material that has been reviewed by the Ombudsman be referred to the Ontario Provincial Police for their review. They have subsequently—

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: They have subsequently brought in the Toronto police force to get to the bottom of the matter, to determine the appropriate next steps. I want you to know that I have full trust and confidence in the OPP and the Toronto Police Service to determine whether and what type of review—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

1440

Mr. Tory: We're at 134 questions and still zero answers. When you talked about what you've directed the lottery corporation to do, we want to know whether you directed them or didn't direct them to do anything in the period before you got caught. That's really what we want to know.

Here's another quote, from Premier Dalton McGuinty when he was Leader of the Opposition. He said that the privacy commissioner "will not, for instance, consider the issue of ministerial accountability—that does not

come under the jurisdiction of his office—and that's something we're very interested in."

It's exactly the same situation here. The police have no responsibility to look into ministerial accountability, nor does the Ombudsman, nor does KPMG, and you absolutely refuse to deal with the question of ministerial accountability, which could be looked into by a committee of this Legislature.

Here's one more quote from now Premier Dalton McGuinty when he was on this side of the House: "There are many, many more questions that we feel ought to be answered, and for that reason once again I'm asking that you allow this House, through an all-party legislative committee, to subpoena witnesses and have them answer questions under oath."

I agree with what Mr. McGuinty said then. Why won't you agree to do it now? What are you hiding?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Contrary to my partisan friend opposite and members of his caucus—I understand where they come from. All members of this Legislature have their own partisan perspectives, but of course, an independent officer of this Legislature, the Ombudsman—I would quote, for the member opposite, his report, page 68. The member is so fond of quotes. The Ombudsman says, "I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change."

This is in stark contrast to the actions that were taken under a previous government, many of its members who sit in Mr. Tory's caucus along the front bench with him. I do note that last week the leader of the official opposition indicated that member from Erie-Lincoln and the member from Lanark-Carleton had some additional information to be able to shed views on these particular matters, yet for some unknown reason the leader of the official opposition will not ask his members to come forward and share what they knew, when they knew it, what actions they did or did not—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been answered. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: That is a completely ridiculous answer, because of course what those two people said—actually, I correct myself: It's a completely ridiculous non-answer. What those two people said was that they were willing to come before a committee and answer any questions anybody had, which is a lot more than what you've been prepared to do. You're not prepared to appear anywhere and answer any questions for anybody, including right here in this House.

Again, let me quote Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty when he was Leader of the Opposition. He said: "This has everything to do with political standards. It has to do with what this government sees as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour." I'll go on to quote a former Liberal cabinet minister, Elinor Caplan, on a different matter, when she said that "only a legislative committee with the authority to subpoena people under oath can get to the bottom of that."

What are you hiding? All you have to do is say that you'll have a legislative committee. We can bring all the papers forward, bring everybody forward—former ministers, current ministers, Premier's office, your staff—and answer whatever questions the members of the Legislature have. Why won't you do that?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The Ombudsman is very clear in his March 26 press conference. He said: "I conclude that they"—the OLG—"put profits ahead of public service. I think there was a point, a crossroads, in 2002.... At that point, the OLG could have gone two ways. It could have said, 'We'll apply the law and take the measures to act diligently.' One month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the Supreme Court didn't apply. Then it became a slippery slope."

When Mr. Tory and his party and members of his caucus were at the helm, they looked the other way. They attempted to sweep these matters under the rug.

This government has brought in KPMG. We've welcomed the Ombudsman's investigation. We've referred the appropriate matters to the OPP and subsequently to the Toronto Police Service for their review. This government has taken decisive action. This government is protecting the public interest. Unfortunately, that contrasts—and I understand that the leader of the official opposition is rather sad to hear the record of his party and is ashamed of it. He should stand in his place. He should apologize for the way—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been answered. Thank you.

New question.

Mr. Tory: My question is for the same minister in charge of lotteries and it concerns the lottery scandal. We're now at 136 questions and still no answers but a lot of hot air and pomposity.

Here is a quote from Hansard: "Our public and our traditions of fairness demand that this matter be reviewed by a committee of this House. The course that the government members of the committee have embarked the committee upon means that this government has no intention of dealing with this matter publicly and fairly. Government members have accused us of being on a witch hunt. We are on a hunt—a hunt for the facts, and we will pursue those facts relentlessly, rigorously and unfailingly." The speaker was a relatively new member of provincial Parliament for Ottawa South who is now the Premier of this province, Dalton McGuinty. It's remarkable how much sense he made back then and it's remarkable how arrogant it is today for this government to refuse to do the very thing they talked about then and refer this matter to a legislative committee—

The Deputy Speaker: Question?

Mr. Tory:—so that the kind of things that no one has asked about can be asked about.

Once again, I want to ask the minister, does he agree with the sentiments expressed by his leader, now Premier, in 1991, and can we get these matters in front of a legislative committee so we can get to the bottom of it?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I say to the member opposite that I and the government are doing what is the responsible thing. We're rolling up our sleeves. We're working on behalf of Ontarians to fix the problems. Unfortunately, the members on the other side looked the other way or swept these matters under the rug. We will rebuild the confidence of the public in their corporation. We have begun to act quickly to implement the recommendations of both the Ombudsman and KPMG. Ontario Lottery and Gaming is in the process of implementing many of those recommendations. I will review them for the Leader of the Opposition: 17 have already been acted upon or are already implemented; 25 more will be in place by the end of June; the remaining 18 are ongoing and will be complete as soon as possible. Some of these include self-checking—

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Hon. Mr. Caplan:—and 8,800 self-checking devices have been made available and will be fully rolled out by the end of June. As of April 10, there are 6,557 ticket-checkers that have been installed at lottery terminals right across the province. There is—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been answered. Supplementary?

Mr. Tory: I notice how the minister over and over again—that's question 137 and no answers—conveniently ignores the portion of the Ombudsman's report that says that the record pace of insider claims, including the famous \$12.5-million cheque that was just sent out the door with people holding their noses and whatnot, occurred on the watch of this administration. That's what we want to get to the bottom of: what has happened on their watch.

In 1996 the current Premier, Dalton McGuinty, said the following, and I quote from Hansard: "If the Premier is convinced that the minister has nothing to hide, then why not agree to the all-party legislative inquiry? Do the minister a favour. He's going to be hanging under a cloud after the result of this commissioner's inquiry. There's always going to be a lingering doubt. Do the minister a favour. Give him the opportunity to come before a legislative committee."

I find myself again in agreement with those words—

The Deputy Speaker: Question?

Mr. Tory:—and wonder why you don't want to have the opportunity, as Mr. Hudak and Mr. Sterling have said they would, to appear in front of that committee to answer any questions that anyone has so that you can show, for once and for all, that you do have nothing to hide. What are you hiding? Why don't you want to have a legislative inquiry to get to the bottom of ministerial—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Frankly, nothing. The Ombudsman was interviewed on CH television just this past weekend. I have a quote from his interview. He says, "Well, I'm pleased that the recommendations were accepted. I think the recommendations are very substantial. Key to them: screening of retailers, the secret shopping scheme we recommended, the policing of retailers by an outside

agency, a new adjudicative agency to decide who gets awards in what disputes.”

The Ombudsman goes on: “These are radical changes and I’m happy with the government’s response. Now the government has chosen to move forward to the OPP. It is not a recommendation I made at that time.”

I can assure the members opposite and the leader of the official opposition that I have engaged my colleague the Minister of Government Services in the work as far as setting up the appropriate oversight and regulatory agency.

The Deputy Speaker: Answer?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: He has already engaged, on more than one occasion, Ontario’s Ombudsman in order to get the proper insight and view to make sure that Ontarians’ trust and confidence in their lottery scheme are well placed, making sure—

The Deputy Speaker: The answer has been given. Final supplementary.

1450

Mr. Tory: Mr. Speaker, 138 questions and no answers. Again, the people would like to see us get to the bottom of this so they will know that they can buy their tickets and that the lottery corporation is being run in a proper manner and that we go back and determine the important matter of who knew what inside the government of Ontario, in the Premier’s office and in the minister’s office, when did they know it and what did they do about it when they found out this information?

What we have going on here is nothing short of a cover-up. It is obvious, when you don’t agree to some kind of an open committee hearing like this, that you must have something to hide. The Premier himself, when he was Leader of the Opposition, said, “There are many, many more questions that ... ought to be answered and that it should be done through an all-party legislative committee which can “subpoena witnesses and have them answer questions under oath.” I’m assuming that the minister disagrees with the statements made then by his own leader, mainly that this is the best place to deal with it. Will you support our motion to have this go to a legislative committee? Will you appear there and support the words of your own leader that this is the best way to get to the bottom of this terrible scandal?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I can understand the partisan opinion of my friend opposite. It doesn’t make that truthful or factual; it doesn’t make it the facts of the matter as the Ombudsman found them. The Ombudsman is an independent, unbiased, non-partisan officer of this Legislature. I am very heartened when the Ombudsman has commendation for me as a minister and for this government when he says, “I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to” my important “recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change.”

Regrettably, in 2002, when that crossroads was reached, members to your left and members to your right chose to look the other way, chose not to act to protect the public interest. But this government is different than

the members across the way. We have chosen to take decisive action to protect the public interest, to make sure the right things are done, to ensure that all Ontarians will know that when they put their loonie or toonie down, they are playing a fair game. Would that actions had been taken appropriately when they were—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been answered. Thank you.

New question?

DISCLOSURE OF TOXINS AND POLLUTANTS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, New Democrats believe that Ontarians have a right to know about the toxins they may be exposed to in consumer products and by industrial operations. Toxic chemicals can be found in many everyday products like household cleaners, beauty products, even children’s toys. The question is this: Do you believe people have the right to know what toxic chemicals they may be exposed to on a daily basis?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): Certainly as a mother of two small children, I am somebody who reads labels and pays attention to what products I bring into my household, and I know that many Ontarians do that. My primary focus as Minister of the Environment is, though, not about notification but about reduction, what science we have before us and has been developed in the province. We want people to know that the government is taking steps to reduce the amount of toxins in the atmosphere. One of the things that we did very early on in my mandate was update the standards for 40 air pollutants. That was really the biggest move on that single file in more than 25 years. Since that time, we have been tackling another 15 air standards with the most up-to-date scientific information. That is something that is critical to mothers, because they expect that if we have information, we take steps to remove those pollutants from the atmosphere.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, this is about the public’s right to know. The public wants to be able to take action. In beauty products alone, there are 10,000 ingredients that are suspected or confirmed carcinogens, hormone-mimicking chemicals or substances linked to birth defects. The question is, don’t you think people ought to be able to know about this? Don’t you think there ought to be public disclosure so that people can know about this?

Minister, there is a bill before this Legislature. In fact, it’s going to committee. It’s called the Community Right to Know Act, and it would provide that kind of public disclosure. The question is this: Will the McGuinty government bring it forward for third reading and will the McGuinty government vote for it after it is addressed in committee next week?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I want to encourage my friend opposite to look at the new Ministry of the Environment

website, because we already do have a lot of toxic-use reporting and public notification. One of the things that we've tried to do is make some of that information more accessible to the public. The ministry's airborne contaminant discharge monitoring and reporting regulation, which is regulation 127, and Environment Canada's national pollutant release inventory were developed to provide the public with access to information on industrial emissions in their own community. Regulation 127 requires the reporting of some critical substances, and from smaller facilities.

So here in the province we're really doing our part to ensure that that information is made available. We work closely with the federal government, which certainly has a large role to play in providing this information. It is also incumbent upon each of us—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Answer.

Hon. Ms. Broten: —to ensure that we are cautious about the products that we bring into our own homes.

Mr. Hampton: Speaker, you said it when you asked for an answer.

Minister, it's about the public's right to know. Environmentalists will tell you that one of the best ways to clean up the environment and to protect public health is to provide people with information. That's what this is all about. We've got neighbourhoods that are built next to old industrial waste dumps. We've got soccer fields and sports fields that are built on top of old garbage dumps. We have situations in urban neighbourhoods where we've had industrial fires and people have simply been told, "Stay indoors. Keep your windows and doors shut." Really, what it boils down to is that people need to know what kinds of toxic chemicals may be in their neighbourhood, what kinds of toxic chemicals may be in everyday products.

The question is simple: Does the McGuinty government support the Community Right to Know Act? Yes or no?

Hon. Ms. Broten: The McGuinty government and the Ministry of the Environment have state-of-the-art air monitoring technology. We send that technology each and every time there might be an incident in a project to make sure Ontarians are safe.

What I think that folks in Toronto in particular do have a right to know is that the leader of the opposition, the third party—this is a party that has taken a position against an extensive subway expansion that would be something that would improve air pollution and help tackle climate change in our province.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the minister responsible for democratic reform. Yesterday, the citizens' assembly recommended proportional representation as the basis for our electoral system. This means that we will now vote on the recommendation in a referendum in October. But the McGuinty

government has already set 60% as the approval rating for the referendum.

New Democrats believe your requirement for a 60% approval rating is both undemocratic and unfair. Minister, will you show respect for democracy and set the referendum approval level at 50% plus one?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the honourable member for the question and for his interest in this process.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the 103 randomly selected Ontarians from across the province who did this work. They got together every second weekend for seven months, away from their families, right here in Toronto to learn and then deliberate about this. They did in fact come up with a recommendation, which is not quite what the honourable said. It's mixed member proportional representation, which means that 70% of the seats will be just the way they are elected now, if this passes, and 30% will be from party lists.

Having said that, to answer the honourable member's question directly with respect to the referendum threshold, we believe that if Ontarians vote for a change, this will be a foundational change. It won't be something easily undone in four years, as an election, if you want to un-elect a government. Therefore, we believe it's a reasonable threshold. It's a good threshold. It's the one that British Columbia and Prince Edward Island also follow.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, if you were to go out there across Ontario and say to people, "Do you believe that a requirement of 60% approval is fair and democratic?" I think I know what you'd get. People would say no. Democracy in our society is 50% plus one, and to require more than that is both undemocratic and unfair.

My question is this: A majority reflects the will of the people. Will you set the referendum approval rating at 50% plus one and genuinely respect the will of the people?

1500

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: Again, I thank the honourable member for the question. I understand his excitement over this proposed change for electoral system reform; I understand that completely. Having said that, we have set 60% as the threshold and we will not change that threshold.

Mr. Hampton: I don't think I need to tell you the reaction of the public in British Columbia, where people there, by a significant majority, voted for electoral reform, but then, even though a significant majority had voted for electoral reform, the Liberal government said, "No, we're not having any electoral reform." It seems to me that you have stacked the deck against democratic electoral reform by requiring a majority of 60%.

Minister, it's about the will of the people. If 50% plus one vote for electoral reform, is the McGuinty government going to stand there and say, "Despite the fact that this is the will of the majority, the McGuinty government says no"?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: There are some differences between the experience of British Columbia and the experience here. What the assembly has recommended in MMP is quite a bit easier to understand than the STV in British Columbia. One of the criticisms in British Columbia that we are attempting to learn from is that it was a very complicated system for many people to understand. That is the feedback that we received when we were there from a number of people and groups. This will be easier to understand. We're committed to a well-funded public education campaign to explain it to the people of this province. In New Zealand, 80% voted for change. If people want a change, they'll vote for change. If they want to keep the status quo, they'll keep the status quo. That's democracy.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): My question is for the minister responsible for lotteries, and once again concerns the lottery scandal. I think this is the 139th question to this minister and his Premier. Hopefully, we'll get a response this time.

As the minister is aware, the official opposition has a motion coming before the House today that would refer the scandal to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. If the issue goes to committee, we can then have witnesses attend and testify under oath. For example, we could have Wilson Lee, your current chief of staff, testify as to what happened April 11, 2006, when he received an e-mail advising that the CBC was looking into the insider-win scandal. Mr. Lee could testify as to what he told you about it and what he told other people about it.

My question for the minister is this: What are you afraid of? Why don't you want to give Mr. Lee the opportunity to testify before the committee? Why don't you want that to happen?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): First of all, I disagree with the member opposite. The facts are not as he states them. I should tell you that this government has a track record of opening doors where they were previously locked, shining a light on these particular matters.

I understand this member was the former chair of the executive council, the chair of cabinet under the previous government. For eight years, under this minister's watch, not one committee, not one agency was called before the standing committee on government agencies. When this government came into place, we said that wasn't acceptable, that we would allow standing committees to have an opportunity to review various agencies. So this Premier and this government empowered the committee, chaired by a member of your own caucus, to look into government agencies. They subsequently concluded reviews into Ontario Lottery and Gaming, Hydro One and the LCBO—that's three—and they're now in the

process of reviewing the next three: HPARB, WSIB and OPG. That will be six agencies in four years—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The response has been given. Supplementary?

Mr. Runciman: You know, if there's a light being shone here, it's being shone on the phoniness of the Liberal Party's 2003 election promises. One of them was to give more responsibility to backbenchers and legislative committees, and certainly they're not doing that in this instance.

You have to ask, what is the reason you're not allowing this to happen? You apparently don't want people to know that you were either asleep at the switch or negligent in terms of your own responsibilities. Apparently, you don't want people to know your re-election team apparently participated in a cover-up of this scandal, an effort to sweep it under the rug. This was all about political protection, not public interest.

If none of that is true, I ask the minister: Prove it by voting for our motion this afternoon. Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I think you've got to look at the veracity of the member—who has previously been found in contravention of the Members' Integrity Act—asking these kinds of questions. He sits beside the former minister responsible for the agency when they arrived at the crossroads, as the Ombudsman called it, in the year 2002. The Ombudsman says, "At that point, the OLG could have gone two ways. It could have said, 'We'll apply the law and take the measures to act diligently.' One month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the Supreme Court didn't apply. Then it became a slippery slope."

This member, a former chair of the executive council, chose to look the other way, chose to sweep these matters under the rug, chose not to want to get to the bottom of it. In contrast to this minister and this government, who have rolled up their sleeves, who have called in KPMG, welcomed the Ombudsman, referred these matters to the OPP and on to the Toronto police force, who have begun to implement the recommendations—some 60 in total—about the Ombudsman and KPMG. Seventeen have been implemented already, another 25 by the end of June, and the other 18 are ongoing.

I'll put the record of this government against this member and his colleagues any day of the week.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, the McGuinty government has not been straightforward with the taxpayers of Ontario about the true cost of the private, profit-driven hospital deal in North Bay. You say you got an independent assessment, but in a letter dated March 16, PricewaterhouseCoopers admitted they couldn't independently verify the numbers that the McGuinty government gave to them about the cost of the deal.

Minister, will you table the PricewaterhouseCoopers report today so that Ontarians can see for themselves how

the McGuinty government has skewed the numbers regarding the private, profit-driven hospital deal in North Bay?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): As I indicated to the member last week, the value-for-money report will be posted very shortly on the Infrastructure Ontario website.

I would invite all Ontarians to take a look at that report and to form their own opinions. We have previously, with the Montfort Hospital, which was under an execution order by a previous government—that hospital is being rebuilt. In fact, Deloitte and Touche took a look, comparing it apples-to-apples versus a traditional method, versus AFP, and have found that Ontarians have saved approximately \$19.5 million when it comes to constructing that hospital.

Better than saving the money, that hospital is being built. Under previous governments, these capital projects were not undertaken. Ontarians had to wait long times to get access to modern, state-of-the-art medical services. It's only because of the actions of members like Monique Smith from Nipissing that the North Bay hospital is even going ahead. I'll be happy in supplementary to share with the leader of the third party many of the other wonderful achievements in the other communities—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The government says that when the cost of a hospital goes from \$200 million to \$1 billion, that's a wonderful achievement. I don't think it is. But I've got the letter from PricewaterhouseCoopers that you cite, and it's very interesting. They say, "We did not audit or attempt to independently verify the accuracy or the completeness of the information or assumptions underlying" the public sector comparator which were provided by Infrastructure Ontario, the McGuinty government—"and/or the successful proponent's final offer, nor have we audited or reviewed the successful proponent's financial model." In other words, your own consultant is saying that the numbers aren't there to verify what the McGuinty government is saying.

Minister, when is the McGuinty government going to come clean? When are you going to table the PricewaterhouseCoopers report? When are you going to put the numbers on the table so that people across Ontario will see how much more they're going to pay on these private, profit-driven hospital deals?

1510

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, the price of the hospital is \$551 million. That's very well known. The financing for the hospital will be spread out over a 25- to 30-year period of time, making it affordable. I think most Ontarians are familiar with the concept of a mortgage, where you do not pay everything all up front, but spread out the cost over a period of time and pay less. In fact,

this is one of the ways in which we are able to ensure that hospitals, whether they happen to be in Sudbury, in Barrie, in St. Catharines, Sarnia, Sault Ste. Marie or indeed North Bay—

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Sioux Lookout.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: —and I hear the Minister of Health say in Sioux Lookout, in the member's own riding—that we've been able to get these projects going, which languished under your government and under a previous government. In fact, posted on the Infrastructure Ontario website are the details, the project milestones, the other project announcements, and the value for money report is no different. This government sets a hallmark for transparency where that did not—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The question has been answered.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): My question is for Minister Broten. Minister, there seems to be a considerable buzz around the word "green." Over the past few months, green or environmental issues have skyrocketed to the top of the agenda for industry and politicians alike. Al Gore is touring around, his movie is winning Oscars, and everyone is talking about the environment.

My constituents are very concerned about global warming. While I understand the government will be coming forward with a climate change plan this spring, can you outline for this House the measures the government has taken to date to tackle this very critical issue?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I want to thank my colleague for talking and raising this important challenge and critical issue. Absolutely, yes, we have our sleeves rolled up and are working very diligently on a comprehensive plan that will be released later this spring.

But what I can tell this House is that that plan will be established on our record of action, steps that we have taken that we will build upon when we release that comprehensive plan. Those actions include the fact that carbon dioxide emissions from Ontario's coal-fired power plants are now down 29%, below 1990 levels. Our ethanol-in-gasoline regulation, which puts 5% ethanol in all gas sold in Ontario, reduces our greenhouse gas emissions by 800,000 tonnes. We've invested \$838 million to expand and modernize public transit in the GTA. We are supportive of a subway to move that forward and that will see 35 million fewer car trips on Ontario roads. And those are only a few of the accomplishments.

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you, Minister. I'm very proud of what this government has accomplished. There is a lot of support from buzz.

Last week, this House debated a private member's bill from the member from James Bay that would exempt

land use planning and forestry from emissions reductions. Today I read with interest a press release from John Tory with his climate change plan, this plan from a party that opposed measures like the Clean Water Act and greenbelt legislation, a party that absolutely gutted the funding to the Ministry of the Environment.

Ernie Eves, John Tory's immediate predecessor, called the environmental agreement the "so-called—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Stop the clock.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark—Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe this question is out of order. It is not asking the minister a question about his or her duty.

The Deputy Speaker: It's not a point of order. Member for Huron—Bruce.

Mrs. Mitchell: —"the so-called Kyoto accord." And in June—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Stop the clock again, please. Order. The member for Durham.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Health, come to order so we can all listen to the member for Huron—Bruce ask the question.

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In June 2001, the Sierra Club of Canada said that the Harris—Eves Tories were the worst in Canada on climate change. They gave the government of the day an F-minus. They failed with flying colours. Minister, can you shine some lights on our climate plan?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I'm waiting for my microphone to start working here. I'm not surprised that there is some tension on the other side of the House.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: No, your microphone is working; I just can't hear you above what's going on.

Please, listen to the response of the minister. Minister?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I know that there's some tension on the other side of the House and some concern that some of us might look at some of the proposals being put forward by the opposition, a plan that seems to have been cobbled together by reading our "already done" list. Mr. Tory advocates raising the standards of the building code. We've already done that. The opposition advocates putting in energy-efficient standards. We've already done that. The opposition advocates energy-efficient appliances for government. We passed a law that sets energy-efficient standards for a wide range of projects and the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act, not just for the government, so that all Ontarians can save money on their electricity bill. The opposition and Mr. Tory voted against those measures. Their plan also says we should sit on our hands until 2012 and study things from 2012 until 2016, five years from now. That's not leadership—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The response has been given. New question?

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): I have a question for the minister responsible for lotteries in light of the ongoing lottery scandal. Minister, in March 2005, some 60 or more news articles and significant television and radio coverage blew the lid off the scandal at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. when it came to insider wins. Minister, when you became minister, were you briefed on insider wins, and if so, when?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): We now have an opportunity from the former minister responsible for OLG. The Ombudsman indicates that there was a crossroads in 2002. At that point, the OLG could have gone one of two ways. They could have said, "We will apply the law and take the measures to act diligently." But a month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended the binding law from Superior Court didn't apply. Then it became a slippery slope. The real question here is: What did this member know? Why didn't he act? Why did he cover up these matters? Why did he sweep them under the rug?

I hear members of his caucus say that he wants to talk, that he wants to tell what he knew. Come forward. Tell us what you knew. Tell us what you did or did not do. Don't let the leader of the official opposition gag you. Don't allow him to keep these matters in the dark, just like it was previously. Do what this government does: Be transparent, shine a light on these matters.

Mr. Hudak: With all due respect, what a load of horse feathers coming from the minister across the way—again, a simple question that he won't answer. He won't answer what happened with the April 11 e-mail to his staff and his senior staff. He won't answer a simple question about the triumvirate of Liberal spin doctors: Mr. Warren, Mr. Kinsella and campaign manger Don Guy, the Who's Who of the Liberal campaign that appeared to participate in the cover-up of this issue—simple questions the minister refuses to answer.

Minister, why won't you go to committee, swear an oath and answer these questions? I said I will; I know my colleague from Lanark—Carleton would. I'll bet you Joe Cordiano from York South—Weston would come before the committee. Listen, I'll hold your hand. I'll rub your back. I'll pour you a warm tea. It ain't going to be so bad. Minister, come clean, come before the committee.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I don't need a special date to be able to provide answers and insight.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. Keep the clock going. The opposition, I cannot hear the minister's reply, and now I can't hear it from the government side. Please, listen to the minister's response. Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The member says he has something to offer. He has some insight to provide. He has some information that he is feeling perhaps guilty about

not providing at an earlier time. I'm sure that his colleague from Lanark—Carleton too feels the same way. Then the question is: Why not be open? Why not provide the information to this House, indeed, to all Ontarians? Currently, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Toronto police department are reviewing these matters. If the member has some information, I don't know why he wouldn't want to provide it.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The only reason I can assume is that some information was known, that the appropriate actions were not taken at that time, that the member does not want these matters to come to light and that—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The question has been answered. New question?

1520

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto—Danforth): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, for some years people have been calling for reform of funding for blue box here in Ontario. Today, the front page of the Toronto Star talked about the shaky financial ground that Toronto's blue box system is on. Will you immediately order Waste Diversion Ontario to pay the full cost of all blue box programs?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I am very proud of the actions that our government has taken. We have responded to a call made by AMO, made by municipalities, for so many years to see that our waste is properly diverted from landfill and to no longer have broken glass ending up in a landfill. That's what the deposit return program has put in place: a sustainable future here in this province. I am very proud of that action and we will continue to move to divert more waste from landfill every step of the way.

Mr. Tabuns: Minister, you have no diversion plan. You broke your promise on diversion. You broke your promise on banning organics going into landfill. You stand up and you take credit. You've got problems with the financing of blue box here in Ontario. You've got municipalities in trouble. When are you going to actually take action and help municipalities divert that waste? When are you going to direct the waste diversion office to fund those blue box programs?

Hon. Ms. Broten: My friend needs to do a bit more research. Municipalities support the action that we have taken because they were losing money with respect to that structure of the blue box program. We were the first government that funded the blue box program. So now I guess Ontarians are to believe that the opposition is against the blue box and against the subway. What a shameful record.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): My question is for the minister responsible for transportation. Minister, recently the three levels of government came together to

make a long-standing, much-awaited announcement that finally the Spadina subway extension to York University is now a reality. From a transportation point of view, it's an historic move. York University is in the heart of my riding of York West and, in my view, the subway extension to York University will open up accessibility not just to those 51,000 students who commute every day to York but also the entire region of York and the municipality of Vaughan as well.

Minister, given the significance of this project, can you tell the members of this House why it is so important that we move forward in making the subway extension to York University a reality sooner rather than later?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to thank the member for York West for his steadfast encouragement around the subway extension. Unfortunately, I can't say the same thing about the NDP caucus. They voted against it and they actually voted against funding for it as well.

Every day 65,000 people travel to York University. We also know that within the greater Toronto region the numbers are going to increase substantially. What we're doing for the first time ever is actually planning ahead as opposed to behind. We're looking at how we in fact provide for the future, not only for those students but ultimately we're talking about 36 million transit trips. That will eliminate 30 million car trips, which means that 250,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced. That's the difference between the NDP and their particular perspective of cancelling something, whereas we know it's—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Sergio: Minister, I can appreciate the importance of the subway extension to York University. It brings much-needed relief to students, staff and all commuters who travel between York region and Toronto. I am sure that, beyond this, the local business community will also see enormous benefits. They will have more opportunity by creating much-needed jobs and an easier commute for all those involved.

Minister, on Wednesday, April 11, 2007, in this House the leader of the third party said that we don't need another subway mega-project, a shocking admission by the leader of the NDP.

Minister, for the benefit of the people of York West and the benefit of this House—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sergio:—can you tell us where this government stands on the issue of public transit and the need for sustainable transportation systems in Ontario?

The Deputy Speaker: I don't know how the Minister of Transportation heard the question, but we'll see if she can answer it. Minister of Transportation?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I did hear, however, when the leader of the third party, Mr. Hampton, indicated—

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): What did he say?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: He said, "We don't need another subway mega-project ... extending the subway ... into a lightly populated York region"—which has a mere 870,000 people. Obviously the member can't count, either.

There is no question that since being in government, we've put \$3.6 billion into public transit in this province, and we've done it for a reason. We know that the greater Toronto area is growing, and it's growing at an exponential rate. We know that we need to do some strategic planning today for tomorrow. Part of that has to be how we deal with gridlock issues, and one of the best ways, of course, is making sure that public transit plays just as pivotal a role as air, rail, marine, land and bridges do.

It makes a difference when you've got that kind of investment. That's why you need a subway—we need a subway—going into areas like York region. It's the first time we're actually looking at an interjurisdictional transit program of this nature. And it means jobs.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the minister responsible for gaming. Fully 144 questions have now been asked on the lottery scandal, and you and your government have not answered a single one. This stonewalling, this cover-up is why we need to get the scandal to a standing committee on the Legislative Assembly so that we can have people testify under oath about matters that have not been investigated by the Ombudsman or by the police. You would agree I'm sure, Minister, that this is the right thing to do, because so far we have seen only a cover-up. There has been no attempt to get to the bottom of this situation.

Your Premier once said this about something similar: "It becomes more obvious why only a public, all-party inquiry can find out what really happened." This applies to this scandal. Will you and your government support our request that this go to a standing committee?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I don't share the partisan political views of my friend opposite or her speculation, innuendo or opinion. In fact, what Ontarians support as well is action being taken where she and her colleagues sat around the cabinet table, looked the other way or swept these matters under the rug.

This government, in contrast, has taken action. We've called in KPMG—the accounting firm of your party, I would say—and we are implementing all of their recommendations. I've directed Ontario Lottery and Gaming that the recommendations of the Ombudsman be implemented as well. We've had the Ombudsman, an independent officer of this Legislature who doesn't have the partisan bias of any member—and the government in fact is implementing his recommendations. We've laid the material the Ombudsman reviewed in front of the Ontario Provincial Police, who certainly do not have a partisan

bias, as do members here. The Ombudsman has indicated that we should separate the functions, eliminate that culture he said so badly needs changing that was nurtured under your government—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The answer has been given. Thank you. Supplementary?
1530

Mrs. Witmer: I would say to the minister that it's obvious that your government is showing no leadership on this issue once again. When your leader sat on this side of the House, this is what he had to say about things: "You've got a chance to show some leadership here. You can refer this to a legislative inquiry and we'll get to the bottom of this affair once and for all, or you can stonewall and you can sweep things under the rug and you can hide." So far, your government and your Premier have chosen to stonewall; you've chosen to sweep things under the rug; you've chosen a course that, in the words of Murray Campbell, is "too patronizing for words." Why won't you finally do the honourable thing today and support our motion to get this to a standing committee so we can put this whole scandal behind us? Show some leadership, you and your government.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I disagree with the member opposite. She's entitled to her views and her opinions. I understand they're clouded by her partisan perceptions. But the only ones who swept these matters under the rug were her and her colleagues when they were sitting in cabinet. In fact, the opposite is true. This government has shone a light on these matters. We're rolling up our sleeves to fix a problem and a culture of an organization that, unfortunately, members opposite left.

We made a commitment to act quickly to implement the recommendations. In fact, I would share with the member opposite that, of the total 60 recommendations from KPMG and the Ombudsman, 17 have already been implemented, 25 will be implemented by the end of June, and the remaining 18 are ongoing. Some of those include implementing self-check machines; 8,800 self-check devices will be made available and fully rolled out by the end of June. As of April 10, there were 6,557 of these machines. We have lowered the threshold at OLG from a \$50,000 to a \$10,000 level when an investigation—

The Deputy Speaker: A response has been given. Thank you. New question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, your government in the last budget singled out the diamond mining industry by almost tripling royalties paid by diamond mines. This change in tax policy not only treats diamond mines differently than any other mining jurisdiction but also moves Ontario from one of the most competitive mining sectors in the world to one of the least competitive mining sectors in the world and, as a result, will curtail future investment in this province by the mining industry.

My question's a simple one, Minister. You're the minister of mines. Do you think this won't hurt the mining investment that's coming to Ontario, tripling the royalties on diamond mining?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I know one thing: Our very, very proactive approach to mining has ensured that more new mines were opened in 2004 than in any other year. We look at the opportunity of mining as an economic pillar: \$9.4 billion to the Ontario economy. Then we compare that against the NDP record when they were in power: 13 mines closed and six mills connected to mining closed. I will match our record in mining against their record in mining any time.

Mr. Bisson: Last week, the head of De Beers Canada stood in this Legislature downstairs and said, "Look in the back. Here's the first diamond mine to be opened in Ontario, and it will be the last diamond mine to open in Ontario because of your fiscal policies."

So I ask you again—you were standing there—will you do what is right as the minister of mines: stand up for the mining industry, northern Ontarians and workers within that industry and the communities they live in, and beat back this attempt by your government to triple diamond royalties in this province, killing future investment in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: I don't mind the fact that we try to play partisanship, but when it comes to our natural resources, we should all be on the same page, trying to maximize opportunity.

Let's be honest here. If we look at the Ontario mining association report, we will see that of minerals produced in Ontario, nickel led the Canadian ranking; gold led the Canadian ranking; the platinum group led the Canadian ranking; cobalt led the Canadian ranking. When we look at capital investment, Ontario led the Canadian ranking. Why? Because we have set the table for future development in the mining industry in Ontario. I am proud of our record. I continue to be proud of our record. We're creating real jobs, real sustainability, not like their record of abuse, neglect and closure.

EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, I was pleased to learn that your parliamentary assistant and our colleague the hard-working member for Northumberland made an important rural economic development announcement this morning in Perth, Ontario. I understand that this is just one of the ways the McGuinty government is working on the side of businesses and families to strengthen Ontario's economy and build prosperity. I can appreciate how important these announcements are for eastern Ontario. Just last September, I announced funding support on your behalf which will help the eastern Ontario agri-food business sector and potentially lead to more jobs and new opportunities for our communities.

Minister, can you please inform the House how this morning's announcement will build economic prosperity for the eastern Ontario region?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'm happy that the hard-working member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell brought this question to the floor of the Legislature, because I think it's very important. People in the province of Ontario and members of this House appreciate the investments that our government is making in rural communities.

As he indicated, this morning there was an announcement in Perth providing \$500,000 to Code's Mill Inn and Spa in the beautiful village of Perth. Code's Mill Inn and Spa is currently working to establish an accredited college-level training program for hospitality and restaurant management in that community. They put together a very compelling application, and our government is happy to support partnership arrangements like the one that has been identified for the Perth community.

In addition to investments in RED, our government is investing in rural Ontario through COMRIF: \$84 million—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Lalonde: Minister, the people of eastern Ontario are extremely pleased by your dedication to rural Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Lalonde: I'm glad that our government has committed to working with small towns and rural communities to develop well-qualified workers, better jobs and an innovative economy. This is an important announcement and will be welcome news in eastern Ontario.

Our government's commitment to rural and eastern Ontario has not always been shared by previous governments. The former Conservative government, as you are well aware, was neglectful of rural Ontario, especially eastern Ontario. Can you please share with this House their record of neglect and mismanagement?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I could barely hear the honourable member because the NDP weren't paying very much attention to this very good question. That is regrettable and I think reflects the fact that they don't care about rural Ontario, or they would have been listening to this honourable member.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: We're not going to get as many questions in today, because you have been a bit rowdy.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Member for Niagara Centre.

Interjection: He's not in his seat.

The Deputy Speaker: It doesn't matter whether you're in your seat or not; heckling isn't allowed. Minister.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Thank you, Speaker. Again, I think it's unfortunate that the leader of the third party would say that this was not an important question.

Certainly for people in eastern Ontario it's a very important question.

There is no question—and this has been the problem—that governments before have neglected eastern Ontario; certainly the previous government did. It's unfortunate that the previous government cut \$164 million from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food budget. They closed—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Stop the clock. Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: The previous government collapsed the Eastern Ontario Development Corp. The previous government downloaded 40% of provincial highways in eastern Ontario, a burden that the communities in eastern Ontario are still reeling from. That is the sorry record of the previous government. They closed OMAFRA offices in rural Ontario. Also, they have voted against our government's initiatives to invest in eastern Ontario. They—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The time for oral questions has expired.

1540

PETITIONS

MULTIPLE LEGAL PARENTS

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the appeal court of Ontario on January 2, 2007, ruled that 'a child may have more than two legal parents';

"Whereas that sets a precedent and leaves many unanswered questions which could result in possible multiple legal parents and unknown devastating ramifications to children and families of Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to appeal the Ontario Court decision, so that various levels of government may thoroughly study the personal, societal and legal implications of allowing more than two legal parents."

I've signed this also.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that reads as follows:

"Regulate Zoos to Protect Animals and Communities

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly ... to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I am in agreement with that and will send it down with page Craig.

GRAVESITES OF FORMER PREMIERS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a petition signed by a number of members of the Cornwall Township Historical Society, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premiers of Ontario have made enormous contributions over the years in shaping the Ontario of today; and

"Whereas, as a result, the final resting places of the 18 deceased Premiers are among the most historically significant sites in the province, but have yet to be officially recognized; and

"Whereas, were these gravesites to be properly maintained and marked with an historical plaque and a flag of Ontario, these locations would be a source of pride to the communities where these former Premiers lie buried, and provide potential points of interest for visitors;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 25, an act that will preserve the gravesites of the former Premiers of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table with Ashley.

LANDFILL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is currently a proposal to more than triple the size of the Carp landfill in west Ottawa; and

"Whereas this site has been in operation for some 30 years and had been expected to close in 2010; and

"Whereas this landfill sits on porous fractured limestone, the worst possible substratum for a landfill; and

"Whereas the dump is in direct conflict with the exploding residential and commercial growth, soon to be 150,000 plus in Ottawa's west end; and

"Whereas the municipal councillors representing this area—Eli El-Chantiry, Shad Qadri and Peggy Feltmate—and the MPP, Norm Sterling, all oppose this expansion;

"We, the undersigned, support our local representatives and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the Minister of the Environment does not

approve the expansion of the Carp landfill and instead seeks other waste management alternatives.”

And I sign that.

YORK SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I have a petition in relation to the subway:

“Whereas York region and the city of Toronto have witnessed a substantial increase in traffic gridlock over the last several years; and

“Whereas these two regions continue to face traffic gridlock, which is an overwhelming economic and environmental problem; and

“Whereas we are significantly disappointed with the position of the leader of the NDP who wants to cancel the Spadina-York subway extension;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That all York region and Toronto MPPs do their utmost to have the Spadina-York subway extension construction start during the year 2007.”

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

“Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston.”

I agree, and I’ve signed that petition.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): My petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the people of the province of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and their grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

“Subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant’s willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

“Whereas we support Bill 8 as introduced by” the member for Niagara Falls;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents.”

I’m pleased to sign my signature in support of this bill.

CORMORANTS

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to do with cormorants. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas recent scientific studies have conclusively demonstrated that double-crested cormorants consume more fish than commercial fishing, sport fishing and poaching combined;

“Whereas double-crested cormorants are devastating nesting areas for other birds;

“Whereas double-crested cormorants are fouling water and making beaches unusable;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, support the private member’s Bill 156 of Ernie Parsons, MPP Prince Edward-Hastings, to reclassify the double-crested cormorant into the same family as American crows, brown-headed cowbirds and the common grackle. This will allow for greatly increased opportunities for the culling of cormorants, in addition to other steps being taken to control cormorant populations and protect the environment.”

I support this petition.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): I’m happy to share this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the seniors of Ontario request full access and control of their locked-in pension funds at age 55,

without the current restriction imposed by government regulation;

"Whereas the current government regulation restricts what seniors and pensioners are able to do with their own savings and limits their options for an affordable and comfortable retirement;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Pension Benefits Act be amended to give seniors of Ontario the option to transfer their locked-in pension funds into an RRSP at the age of 55, as is the case for seniors in the province of Saskatchewan."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature hereto and give it to David.

YORK SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): "Whereas York region and the city of Toronto have witnessed a substantial increase in traffic gridlock over the last several years; and

"Whereas these two regions continue to face traffic gridlock, which is an overwhelming economic and environmental problem; and

"Whereas we are significantly disappointed with the position of the leader of the NDP who wants to cancel the Spadina-York subway extension;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all York region and Toronto MPPs do their utmost to have the Spadina-York subway extension construction start during the year 2007."

I will affix my signature to that.

1550

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

I agree with this and I will give it to page Alanna, and I sign my name.

BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I present this petition for Mike Brown, MPP for Algoma-Manitoulin.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Shewfelt bridge, which crosses the Goulais River, has been declared unsafe by the Ministry of Transportation;

"Whereas the bridge has united the community of Goulais River for decades;

"Whereas the closure divides the community by stopping emergency vehicles such as fire department and ambulance services, as well as pedestrian, bicycle, recreational vehicle and vehicle traffic;

"Whereas the bridge provides an alternative crossing to the river in case of a closure of the Highway 17 bridge;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request the Ministry of Transportation proceed with the rebuilding or replacement of this important infrastructure."

I give this petition to Craig.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Durham which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

I support this petition and present it to Ashley.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I have a petition concerning long-term care.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214

million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

LAKERIDGE HEALTH

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Before I begin, I just want to acknowledge a good friend and colleague, Mr. Murray Monk, from Nipigon, who came down to see us.

I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Lakeridge Health should receive full funding to properly implement patient services in the community; and

"Whereas Lakeridge Health is currently facing an \$8-million shortfall as a result of government directives; and

"Whereas Lakeridge Health ranks among the best 25% of hospitals in efficiency performance even when compared to single-site hospitals; and

"Whereas this shortfall would negatively affect many vital programs, including mental health programs, crisis intervention services and addiction treatment services at Lakeridge Health;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide long-term fair funding for the important health care services of Lakeridge Health and immediately fully fund the \$8-million shortfall."

I affix my name in full support.

YORK SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I have received another petition with thousands of signatures. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and reads:

"Whereas York region and the city of Toronto have witnessed a substantial increase in traffic gridlock over the last several years; and

"Whereas these two regions continue to face traffic gridlock, which is an overwhelming economic and environmental problem; and

"Whereas we are significantly disappointed with the position of the leader of the NDP who wants to cancel the Spadina-York subway extension;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all York region and Toronto MPPs do their utmost to have the Spadina-York subway extension construction start during the year 2007."

I concur with the petitioners and I will affix my name to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time for petitions has expired.

OPPOSITION DAY

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

SOCIÉTÉ DES LOTERIES ET DES JEUX DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I move that the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly shall meet for the purposes of an inquiry. The terms of reference of this inquiry include but are not limited to: an investigation into the flow of information between the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., the Minister and Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the Premier's office regarding the issues of fraud and other irregularities within Ontario's provincial lottery system, including documentary and viva voce evidence, and a review of the actions taken and the actions which might more appropriately have been taken to protect the interests of the citizens of Ontario and restore their faith and confidence in the integrity of Ontario's lottery system;

That the committee for the purpose of this referral is to be chaired by a member of the official opposition;

That the subcommittee of the committee be composed of one representative from each party plus the Chair;

That the subcommittee shall have the ultimate decision-making power with respect to the calling of witnesses and any other procedural aspects of the proceedings and all matters arising relevant to the execution of the terms of reference of the committee. A minimum list of witnesses will be determined by the House leaders; additional witnesses to be determined by the subcommittee;

That there shall be a committee counsel hired and directed by the subcommittee paid for by the Legislative Assembly;

That the subcommittee can, through Speaker's warrant, compel the attendance of any person to attend and give evidence;

That the subcommittee can, through Speaker's warrant, require any person to produce in evidence such documents and things as the subcommittee may specify;

That the members of the committee and/or their counsel shall be permitted to obtain production and review of any document or thing and disclosure of any viva voce evidence necessary and ancillary to the purpose of this investigation;

That, prior to the commencement of the committee hearings, the subcommittee may require the attendance of any person or production of any document for the purpose of a preliminary examination for discovery;

That the Legislative Assembly committee has priority over all other committees with respect to its sitting time, and in any event, the committee shall not sit as a committee for the purposes of this matter prior to the first day of May, 2007. The committee shall complete its investi-

gation and file its report on this matter no later than the 30th day of June 2007;

That the Legislative Assembly committee be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair and notwithstanding prorogation;

That any witness compelled to appear before the committee may attend with counsel and shall be required to give testimony upon oath pursuant to section 59 of the Legislative Assembly Act; and

That the committee may, if requested, permit any portion of its proceedings to occur in camera.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Tory has moved opposition day number 3. Mr. Tory.

Mr. Tory: I believe that this particular request that we have made for a legislative committee is very important within the context of the two key responsibilities I think that we have here on this and any other matter. The first thing I think that we have an obligation to do as members of this assembly, whether we be on the government side or the opposition side, regardless of who we are, is to do the right thing—to do the right thing in the eyes of the public with respect to whatever public policy decision or whatever expenditure of government money that we might be overseeing. That's what we're sent here to do. I think above and beyond all else the public would say that we are sent here to do the right thing.

The second thing I think we're sent here to do is, in the way we conduct ourselves, to maintain and to enhance public confidence: public confidence in us, public confidence in democratic institutions generally, in the government of Ontario, in the Legislature of Ontario.

I think that what we have here is a repeated instance, I will confess, of the people on the government side of the House saying over and over again that they have done the right thing. They've done everything that was right—they've asked for every inquiry, every investigation, every body that possibly you could name to look into these matters concerning this terrible lottery scandal—and that they have, indeed, done the right thing. They use quotes of the Ombudsman, I would argue, wildly out of context in trying to pretend that he at any time, in any way, in any words at all ever rendered any opinion whatsoever with respect to anything that went on, particularly in 2004, 2005 and 2006, with the exception of the relatively limited numbers of instances that he actually reported on.

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We have 2004, for example; we have the wrap-up of complaints. If you look at the Ombudsman's report itself, it says—and I quote at page 21—"It appears that 2004 was a banner year for controversial insider prize claims." That year, 2004, was actually the second year of the McGuinty government, and he has not in any way opined on, commented on or even indicated he ever investigated anything the McGuinty government, its ministers, the Premier's office, the staff of the minister's office did or did not do. That's because he didn't investigate those things. As a result, we don't have anything in the Ombudsman's report, for example, that deals with what the

government knew, what it did, what it did when it found out about these things in 2004, the so-called "banner year," according to the Ombudsman, for insider prize claims. He didn't look into that because he wasn't asked to, and I would think that maybe he would think that might be outside of his purview.

In 2005, as the member for Erie-Lincoln pointed out in his question today, there were some 60 newspaper, television and radio items concerning the fraud and the disservice that was done to Mr. Edmonds. It defies credibility to think that a minister would have come into his office and that nobody from the bureaucracy, nobody from the lottery corporation, nobody from his own office ever asked him a question, nobody ever offered a briefing, nobody ever offered any advice, nobody gave him any clippings to do with any of this, when there were 60 items taking place in the news. And yet that's the position of the minister and his staff: see nothing, saw nothing, heard nothing, spoke nothing, asked nothing, did nothing. We certainly know the latter one is true, that he sat on his can in his office and did nothing during that period of time. But we want to know. Beyond the fact we know he did nothing, what did he know? What did anybody tell him? Why did he do nothing when he clearly must have known what was going on here?

In 2006, we had Mr. Lee sending and receiving e-mails about this very subject back and forth between the minister's office. Who is Mr. Lee? Well, he was a very senior adviser to the minister, now his chief of staff. On August 30, we have a meeting that took place in the Premier's office involving top people, the who's who, as the member for Erie-Lincoln said today, of the Premier's political circle, having a meeting to discuss what to do later on in the fall. All these people were involved, talking about this as a communications issue and trying to spin their way out of it.

And so we have all these things going on and no investigation has taken place by anybody into any of this. These people across the way know that there has been no investigation of any of these matters by the Ombudsman, there has been no investigation of any of these matters by the police—nor will there be, because it's not something the police will be investigating, the subject of ministerial accountability.

I only ask this question, and I think it goes to the heart of why we moved this motion today: If the people on the government side, as we hear from these repeated answers from the minister and from the Premier, believe they did the right thing, which is our duty here to do on this and every other matter, then why wouldn't they want the air to be cleared so that when there are these questions that remain unanswered with respect to who knew what and who did what and so on, that they wouldn't allow the air to be cleared and for all the facts to be on the table?

It's interesting how history repeats itself. We had in December 1996 an instance in which a minister who was called into question for the release of some information actually in that case had already submitted his resignation. He did the honourable thing and submitted his

resignation because there was a cloud, there was some uncertainty and he thought it best for the system, best for that number two responsibility we have here—to maintain confidence in this place and in the people here and in the process here—to submit his resignation. But Mr. McGuinty, the Premier, then the Leader of the Opposition, still felt it important to have an all-party committee to look into who knew what and when did they know it and how did they come to know it and what did they do about it when they knew. He believed it was important, because I think he understood then that important duty to maintain public confidence.

He pointed out then exactly the same point that we make now, namely, that ministerial and public accountability was not something that was in that case the subject of the examination by the privacy commissioner. It wasn't something that the privacy commissioner could or did investigate, and Mr. McGuinty was saying then that it's something that should be looked into and that it could only be looked into by a legislative committee. We had him saying then that when there was no one clearing the air, he felt that it was—in fact, it was Ms. Caplan, a member of the assembly of the day, who said, “only a legislative committee with the authority to subpoena people under oath can get to the bottom of that, as my leader has suggested.” That followed on the quote of Mr. McGuinty himself, who said on December 9, 1996—and I'm going to put it in the Hansard again, as we did earlier today—“I am convinced, as I'm sure the minister is, that the Information and Privacy Commissioner will not, for instance, consider the issue of ministerial accountability—that does not come under the jurisdiction of his office—and that's something we're very interested in.” He went on to say, “There are many, many more questions that we feel ought to be answered, and for that reason once again I'm asking that you allow this House, through an all-party legislative committee, to subpoena witnesses and have them answer questions under oath.”

Isn't it interesting that in almost exactly the same situation, where here we have the Ombudsman, who did not have the authority and certainly did not conduct any investigation as to who knew what in the minister's office and in the Premier's office, and what they did based on what they knew, that the Premier now, then the opposition leader, thought it was just right to appoint a legislative committee to look into that matter, as did then MPP Caplan, who subsequently went on to become a minister, and yet today, somehow, there is something wrong with this?

I would argue the result has been that confidence has been eroded. Confidence has been eroded we know for sure in the lottery corporation. You could see from the streeters last night on the television news. It was CTV. They went and asked; not me, not anybody else. Here are just two of the answers they got when they went out and said, “Do you think there should be some sort of an independent investigation into the lottery corporation?” One woman, who's not identified, says, “Definitely. It's something that should be looked into, absolutely. It's not

fair and it's not right.” A second man said, “Just to protect my rights as a consumer.” He agreed there should be some kind of an investigation.

The confidence in the lottery corporation has been eroded. The confidence in the government, I would argue, has been eroded. Confidence in the minister has most certainly been eroded, and every day that he gets up and gives these ridiculous, terrible answers that defy any sense of accountability at all, I think it's further eroded. Confidence in the Premier has been eroded, especially when we look at the fact that it seemed okay to stand up for these standards of accountability, transparency and references to legislative committees when he was Leader of the Opposition, sitting in this chair which I assure you I am keeping warm for him, because he will be sitting in it again in less than six months from now.

What happens with his eroding confidence in himself is his business. It's sad for the process of government. What I do take some objection to is that when they do this kind of thing and they stonewall, cover up and refuse to have a legislative committee—which they advocated time and time again when they were in opposition—they erode confidence in this Legislature. To that, I think all of us have the right to take some objection, because it's not fair that through their stonewalling and through their covering up they should erode confidence in this Legislature.

There could only be two explanations for this, and I want to finish on this note because I think it is really the most important note of all. There are only two reasons why they would not have this legislative committee when Mr. McGuinty, the Premier, then opposition leader, stood so many times and articulated so well, I would say, the reasons why you need an independent inquiry to get to the bottom of these kinds of things. The first is that he never believed any of that to begin with. There are words you could use that I would not be allowed to use by you, Mr. Speaker, in this chamber to describe anyone who stood up and said all of those things so many times, supported by so many of his colleagues who now form part of the front bench of this government. I would say that couldn't have been the reason, although we know from the broken promises that there's always that possibility. But having said that, let's put the best spin on it we possibly can and say that it wasn't that reason that was responsible for this.

So what's the other reason? The only other explanation as to why they would not stand up in their place and say, “Yes, we will have the kind of open inquiry this resolution calls for,” is because they have something to hide.

Let me again quote Mr. McGuinty from Hansard. It's certainly in December 1996. He says: “If the Premier is convinced that the minister has nothing to hide, then why not agree to the all-party legislative inquiry? Do the minister a favour. He's going to be hanging under a cloud after the result of this commissioner's inquiry. There's always going to be a lingering doubt. Do the minister a favour. Give him the opportunity to come before a

legislative committee.” Dalton McGuinty, now Premier, went on to say to the then Premier, “Premier, you’ve got a chance to show some leadership here. You can refer this to a legislative inquiry and we’ll get to the bottom of this affair once and for all, or you can stonewall and you can sweep things under the rug and you can hide.” That’s what Dalton McGuinty said back then.

I think that says it all. There must be something to hide here. Why else would they refuse to have this inquiry? The resolution we put forward today is timely, for which I hope many of the Liberal members might actually feel they have a shred of independence left in them and that they will do the right—

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): On a point of order, Speaker: I’m referring to standing order 23(b)—

Interjections.

1610

The Deputy Speaker: Let’s hear the point of order.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: No, I’m sorry, 23(g): “where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Speaker that further reference would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding” and “[i]mputes false or unavowed motive to another member.”

The Deputy Speaker: No, that’s not a point of order.

Mr. Tory: That took about a minute or more of time that the clock was running, and I don’t think it’s appropriate the clock should have been running, if I could ask you to restore that time.

The Deputy Speaker: Frankly, in an opposition day where the time is divided, I have no choice. The floor is yours.

Mr. Tory: That’s interesting. So we can get up when the government people are speaking and use up all their time on points of orders, then?

The Deputy Speaker: If you have a point of order, you will be allowed to have that point of order heard.

Interjections.

Mr. Tory: That’s just another example of why we need parliamentary reform.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my responsibility to apply the rules and that’s what I’m doing exactly: applying the rules.

Mr. Tory: With respect, Mr. Speaker, I understand you’re doing your job. The rules need to be changed, then.

We can have a report that’s timely. We’ve set a deadline in the resolution of June 30. It will be inexpensive compared to other alternatives that might look into this. It will clear the air and it will address issues not yet investigated.

I want to just finish with this note. Mr. Ezrin said—and he was so right when he said it on the Agenda television program—the standard is set by the boss. The standard is set by the boss. At the end of the day here, the Premier of this province has obviously decided a standard in which we don’t have access to all the facts, in which people are not called forward to explain themselves, in which people are not in any way held account-

able for their actions as ministers, staff members and others is acceptable to him. It’s not to me. That will not be the standard applied when we form the government of this province, and I think it is not a standard that is acceptable to the people of this province.

I urge some of the Liberal members who are here, show a shred of independence, do the right thing, vote in favour of this resolution, show some courage, show that that promise made in 2003 meant something in terms of the role of MPPs. Stand up for what the people know is right: to have a legislative inquiry into this matter so we can get to the bottom of it and reassure people that their games are not fixed and that we’re going to find out exactly who knew what and what they did about it.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): It is my honour to speak to this motion. I’m going to support it. And I wanted to speak a little bit about honour and responsibility. Presumably honour and responsibility are the hallmarks of all of us here—that, I hope, is a non-partisan statement—but particularly should be the hallmarks of those who carry cabinet ministry responsibilities and who are responsible for others and responsible for acting and answering for the actions of others.

I wanted to speak about the standing committee on government agencies and our review. I was vice-chair of that committee on the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., and I’ll get to that, but I also wanted to just highlight some of the examples of what has been said in the press over this.

I start back on March 27. This is in the *Globe and Mail*, where they say, “Ontario government officials initially became aware of questions about retailers winning a disproportionate share of jackpots six months before the scandal at its lottery corporation became public last October,” according to documents obtained by *The Globe and Mail*.”

It goes on to say, “OLG has turned a blind eye to crime for many years”—a quote from Mr. Marin himself, who said at a news conference that “his probe concluded that about \$15 million in lottery winnings was paid to ‘internal fraudsters.’”

“In 2003 and 2004 alone, the lottery corporation identified five major suspicious wins by insiders but turned down only one.”

That’s going back many, many years. Then we move along.

Again, this is back in March, and here we are reading from the *Toronto Star*: “In just 90 days, Marin’s investigators were able to piece together five cases where retailers claiming tickets were liars, Marin said. These cases alone add up to \$15 million being paid to ‘internal fraudsters.’”

“This kind of activity didn’t go unnoticed by those running the lottery but they didn’t do much about it. The concerns of one official about suspect claims by retailers in 2003 and 2004”—again, back many years—“including a \$12.5 million prize—were dismissed by the corporation’s CEO, Duncan Brown.” You remember Brown? As they reported, “Brown stepped down on Friday”—this

was back in March—and “he was given a severance package in accordance with his contract of two years’ salary—\$720,000.” I am sure that those people out there buying lottery tickets think it was Duncan Brown who won the lottery, not themselves.

Again, the Star, the Globe—let’s continue on to the Toronto Sun. This is a Toronto Sun article of March 28. Here he goes, “As soon as the “insider win” scandal was exposed, the (OLG) took action—but instead of investigating what went wrong ... it reacted like a business facing a public relations nightmare, it hired experts to dispute the CBC’s findings, even though as our investigators discovered, it knew full well that Mr. Edmonds was far from alone,” Marin said.

“At the meeting were: Kinsella, a top Grit strategist”—I know of Mr. Kinsella’s work; he was at work during my by-election, certainly to the detriment of my congregation and my family—“Warren, a lottery corporation executive formerly with Premier Dalton McGuinty’s office, and reps of two large public relations firms.”

So that was the reaction to the findings. And remember, these are instances of fraudulent behaviour that go back years. So it’s not just the CBC’s report that brought this to light. Presumably, if the minister knew what was happening in his ministry, he would have known about these for years—ever since he got there, in fact.

Then we go to our own Murray Campbell, again in the Globe, back in March. He actually showed where the government got their strategy from. Certainly, they learned from the investigation, the Gomery commission. He said, “It could emulate the former Prime Minister who, when he received the critical Gomery report on Ottawa’s \$250-million national unity initiative, embarked on a high-profile tour that fanned public anger. Or it could try to contain the controversy with a communications plan that sought to reassure lottery ticket buyers that things were being fixed.” So obviously, we know that they decided to go with that latter strategy.

Also, again, this is not just the press, who are of course exponents of what the public thinks as well as being proponents of what they think: “The Consumers’ Association of Canada also called for a judicial inquiry to ‘clear the air’ given questions that remain after Marin’s investigation.” So there is a huge and honourable organization that has called for exactly what we are calling for here.

I’ll give the last word again to our own Murray Campbell. This was an article that was in the Globe on April 5. He said, “You watch Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan long enough and you understand why they call it question period and not answer period.” He goes on to conclude, “It’s too patronizing for words. The performance by Mr. McGuinty and his minister suggest they care more about spinning their way out of the OLG controversy than they do about the people who were defrauded of jackpots after the lottery corporation knew the CBC had it in its sights. It is a dangerous game”—a dangerous game indeed.

Certainly, I would like to remember Bob Edmonds, as I talk about this controversy and what might be the honourable reaction to it. Here was a senior citizen who took this organization to court, who lost thousands and thousands of dollars of his own money, never mind the purported winnings, who died before ever getting an answer from the people across the aisle, who died without ever hearing, aside from a spoken apology, an actual real apology, which would have involved, as we’re calling for, the stepping aside of this minister, the honourable act that anybody would expect someone to do when this is discovered on their watch, a watch that goes back years and years.

It was Edmund Burke who said, “All that it takes for evil to prevail is for good people to do nothing.” This government is doing nothing about this and about their own implication in the fraud that we’ve seen so eloquently discussed in the press—by all the press, by the way.

1620

But what is really most distressing of all is that we had an opportunity and we could have done something about this. This is why we convene these committees. The standing committee on government agencies actually reviewed the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. It was already underway in its review when I was elected in mid-September. That was a place where we could have looked at the OLG, we could have brought them to task. We could have actually had a chance to ask Mr. Caplan to step up to the plate, to answer for his actions, to answer for the actions of his commission and his agency. We could have done something before Mr. Edmonds passed away to actually address his concerns and the concerns of all of those people who suspect and don’t know whether they’ve lost money fraudulently because of the inaction of the OLG.

Whom did we have deputing? First of all, what’s interesting to know is who was on that committee. I want to just pull out the names of those who served on the review of the OLG. These are Mr. Gravelle, Mr. Milloy, Mr. Parsons, Ms. Smith and Mr. Wilkinson. Surely one might ask: Were these MPPs not made aware by the minister and his staff of what the OLG was struggling with all of those years? Why did he not inform his own members as to what was going on so that we could call deputants who actually might be able to shed some light? Instead of having to ask for a government committee now, why weren’t we allowed to do our job back then? We met for weeks and weeks. They were weeks and weeks that predated, then post-dated, the CBC exposé of October 25, and still nothing. One might ask: Were this minister and the caucus not keeping the members of the committee informed? That’s a legitimate question to ask. Or was he deliberately obfuscating with this committee so that they couldn’t do their job? Who knows? We don’t know, but there was a chance to find out and there was a chance to have even those who were working with Edmonds and others come before the committee and talk about it. We could have investigated.

There were two of us on that committee who realized that this might be the venue to conduct such an investigation: myself and also a member of the official opposition, Mr. Joe Tascona, MPP for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. I'm going to read our dissenting opinions that are in there, that make it very clear that at least two members of that committee wanted that committee to do what that committee should have been doing, and that is to investigate the OLG.

Here's what I said:

"To be included in the report on the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. as a dissenting opinion:

"In light of the serious allegations brought against the OLGC of possible vendor misconduct and corporate complicity currently before our Ombudsman and also subject of internal review, we would be remiss on the government agency review committee if we did not call for a re-opening of hearings.

"On November 29, 2006, Mr. Tascona, Ms. Scott and myself, Cheri DiNovo, voted to re-open hearings. We were voted down by the government members, Mr. Gravelle, Mr. Milloy, Mr. Parsons, Ms. Smith and Mr. Wilkinson. I then suggested that a front-page or lengthy paragraph insert be included explaining that this was a "snapshot" report based on hearings held before the recent allegations came to light. That too was voted down." A front page, an explanation—not even that was allowed.

"On behalf of all Ontarians who need assurance that the OGLC lotteries are administered with due diligence.

"Yours sincerely," myself.

This was before the Ombudsman's report. We all knew at least in part what was going to come in that report, and yet this government did nothing, and they had the opportunity. That was the opportunity; that was the committee. This government did nothing. The members of that committee did nothing. In fact, they did worse than nothing; they voted against re-opening that committee so that we could have done something.

You know, it's interesting, again, to look at the Ombudsman's report that came out after that committee sat and then rose. It's interesting to read some of the statements in it—not the infamous page 68, but the rest of the report. I'm just quoting here from page 3 of the executive summary. He says, "We learned during our investigation that there was enough information within the corporation about insider fraud to cause a meeting to be held in August 2004 on the subject, and we found an executive brief that identified five outstanding win claims that were suspicious. The CEO's response to one of his officials' concerns about all of this was discouraging: 'Sometimes you hold your nose.'"

That was back in August 2004. We're talking about systemic issues, systemic problems that were making the round of the courts way back, years and years back. People knew. Those involved knew. Those who had been potential subjects of fraud knew. Yet we hear from across the aisle that again—well, we actually don't hear anything. We don't hear that they didn't know; we hear

nothing. We hear a government stonewalling. We hear the minister who is responsible stonewalling and not giving answers. And more importantly, I think, through all of this what we see is somebody who's taking the role of cabinet minister, of minister responsible for a portfolio, responsible for a corporation that is entrusted with our dollars and with Ontarians' dollars, entrusted to not only collect but also to administer—there are many, many questions that need answering here.

As the leader of the official opposition said, sending in the Ontario Provincial Police—they're not going to investigate the minister's office itself and what he knew and what he didn't know and what the spin doctors knew or what they didn't know, their reaction to this. Really, what are we asking for? We're asking for simply an investigation that could have been done, that wasn't done when we met for the review of government agencies. We're simply asking for another chance, another kick at that can, another chance to do what this government is supposed to do with its committee system, and that is to investigate the actions of some of the crown corporations and certainly the actions of the cabinet ministers.

I'm going to leave some time for my colleague. Certainly, I would love to go on and expand, but mostly I want to remember those—many of those—who are still fighting their way through the courts, still struggling against the heritage that this egregious situation has left. Yet somehow we see the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal standing here day after day, and he doesn't seem in any way to be bearing the burden that ordinary Ontarians, hard-working families, are bearing in all of this. He comes to work every day. It's not costing him money in legal fees. It's not costing him money on lost earnings or possible winnings. In fact, as we saw with the—not dismissal, but the resignation of the CEO of the OLG, you actually gain. You gain from wrongdoing here. You walk away with \$720,000. I wish we could say the same thing for the Edmonds family, that they walked away with at least \$250,000. They didn't. I wish we could say the same thing for all of those who have cases before the courts right now who are possibly missing millions of dollars in lost winnings. I wish we could say the same for them, that they benefited in any way by this scandal.

Again, what are we asking? Not much. We're asking simply for the honourable action, for the responsible action: for this minister to step aside and also for this government to hold a real inquiry, a real committee into the actions of its own crown corporation. We're asking for what should have happened with the review of government agencies, which this government prevented from having acted upon and prevented from happening, much to the chagrin of two of the members of that committee who saw what was happening. We all saw what was happening. Two of us did something about it; the rest of them did not. Again, those who are watching should know there was this opportunity. It was missed. Let's not miss it again. Let's act now to give answers where answers are dramatically needed, dramatically needed, by

all of those out there in the community who are putting down a dollar or two dollars or five dollars every week and want to know that this is not a mug's game, that there's some integrity to the system, and all of those who gain from the system at the other end, all of those charities who gain millions and millions of dollars who want to know that this money that is being entrusted with the OLG is actually being accurately used and spent, and that this minister is responsible and so are his staff for what happens under their watch.

1630

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I like to be straightforward so that you're not second-guessing what I'm going to do, so I just want to let you know that I won't be supporting this motion.

Now we're going to get to why. One of the things that I would like to get straight right from the very beginning is that there's a bit of possible misinformation from the member for Parkdale-High Park when we talk about taking responsibility. Being a new member, maybe she's not aware of this. The agencies committee that she is a new member on in fact did not meet during the previous government at all. So when we talk about the review that was happening, it's a point of clarification and I feel that it's something that needs to come forward. But that's just a part of what I'd like to talk about.

One of the things that the member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey made comment on was about public confidence. In his opinion, confidence has been eroded. I have some old news clippings from a rural paper, so I know that the member, since he represents a rural riding, would be quite interested. These are from shortly after we took over government. When we talk about public confidence and we talk about fiscal accountability and we talk about transparency, I just want to take a snapshot in time of what it was like when we became government, because I feel it's very important to talk about one's actions and not one's words, or, as we say in my riding, the proof is the pudding.

I'm just going to start off with this: "Much of the blame can be put on the previous Progressive Conservative government of Ernie Eves and Mike Harris, because it was the Tories who ran up a huge annual budgetary deficit (which we were only going to find out about after the election)." So now we know that that number is \$5.5 billion. So when we see someone stand up—the official Leader of the Opposition—and his comments are, "Said nothing, heard nothing, did nothing, sat on their cans"—I'm borrowing the phrases from the Leader of the Opposition—one would have to wonder what one did from the opposite side of the House when one knew that one was racking up that type of deficit. Did one say nothing, hear nothing, do nothing and sit on their can? When we talk about confidence and fiscal accountability, in the riding I represent that's what it's all about: Is your house in order?

The type of service that one can provide from a house that is in good order—that's what we can do. How do we begin to build on our public services and the services that

the people of Ontario expect from us if one has no confidence? When I hear the official Leader of the Opposition stand up and say that, I do have to question, did he say nothing, hear nothing, do nothing and sit on his can? Or there's certainly a number of members who were part of the cabinet. So where do accountability and transparency begin, after one becomes the official opposition?

I put it to the members from across the way, I believe that what one can do is to build the services that the people of Ontario want today. One of the things we did as the McGuinty government—which, I might add, the official opposition voted against—was freedom of information and fiscal accountability. It was legislation that was passed to ensure the Auditor General signs off on the province's books six months before an election, so that no one can hide a deficit again. How did the members from the opposite side vote? They voted against it. Why did they vote against it? I have to say, how can they expect the public to have confidence in their actions? It goes back to, the proof is in the pudding. Another comment, if I could just borrow from the member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, is that the standards are set by the boss. So I can only assume from that comment that he supports the position that, being the head of the party, he sets the standards. Therefore, I can only assume that fiscal accountability is still a position that is not supported by the opposition. You are not in favour of it and you aren't prepared to do the right thing. You must take responsibility in order for public confidence to be in place. I can only assume you're going to say nothing, hear nothing, do nothing and sit on your cans.

Now I'm just going to talk about when you said nothing, heard nothing, did nothing and sat on your cans. What happened in rural Ontario? What do you think happened in rural Ontario while you were doing that? I can tell you that one of the things that happened was a massive downloading experience and hospital closures—the Tory health record. I'm pleased to be able to stand up and remind people again this week of when we talk about confidence, accountability, transparency—and I do want to remind people. I can remember this because I was in an elected position when you took over government. I can remember the leader of the party at that time saying, "I will not cut health care. I will not cut education." And I say to the members across the way, the Tory health record cut \$557 million from hospitals over two years, ordered 28 hospitals closed. You closed 5,000 hospital beds, fired thousands of nurses, failed to address the shortage of medical school spaces after the NDP cutbacks, and you refused to collect wait-times data. So I say to the members from across the way: When one talks about accountability and transparency, if one doesn't use the data that one can use as a comparison, what then do you want to compare? The only thing we can do is actually compare the numbers, which we've just stated.

I do know that there's a certain pride in the voice of the opposition members about how the previous leader always did what he said, but he did not. He said he would not cut health care and he would not cut education, but,

given half the chance, I'm telling you, he did it. When we talk about accountability and transparency and doing the right thing, I wonder where it was.

I really do question when they talk about freedom of information. We, the McGuinty government, expanded it to include Hydro One, OPG, universities, etc. Our response rate within the 30-day time frame is over 80%; within 60 days it's 94%. Let's compare that to the Tory record. What do you think happened in 1996? What percentage were they at? They were at 39% of on-time response rate. Then they got a little better by 2000. They got all the way up to 50%, but nowhere near the 94%.

I go back to accountability and public confidence. People want to know from their government, they want to be able to see and understand, where the government is headed. One must ensure that our fiscal accountability and transparency are always in place. I know the Leader of the Opposition has a motion on the floor today, but I say, as from a rural riding, the proof is in the pudding. Repeatedly, the leader—not only the leader but the members continue to vote against what they stand up and talk about day after day in this House. So I would challenge them to rethink their position. If you're going to go down this road, then you need to think not only about what you did in the past, but what you speak of in the future. If in fact you are prepared to support accountability and transparency, then you need to start voting in that manner. So when I hear, "Saw nothing, heard nothing, did nothing and sat on their cans," I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition is inferring that it was members on that side of the House.

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I know that there are many more speakers who want to speak. I want to give them the opportunity, because this is something where we take a great deal of consultation and the ability to listen to our constituents throughout this great province of Ontario, and not only do we hear all of that; we then bring it forward in legislation, as the people expect. We understand that that is part of the process.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to vote against this motion.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise in support of the motion standing in the name of the leader of the official opposition. It's interesting, when you look at the non-answers by the minister responsible for lotteries, how he fails to talk about what's really in the Ombudsman's report. In my comments I'll refer you to page 18, beginning where the Ombudsman says, "In 2003 and 2004 ... a series of problematic insider claims set in motion a tug-of-war over the way the corporation viewed and handled insider wins." He references an Orillia man who came forward in April 2003 with a claim of \$250,000. It was found out that that was fraudulent. The Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., in April 2004, under the McGuinty government, issued a press release, so it entered the public sphere that there was a concern over an insider win, at least in that case.

Similarly, in 2003, a corner store owner in Keswick presented a ticket he said was his. Then he finally

admitted that his wife had found the ticket behind a refrigerator in the store. Nonetheless, the corporation still paid the owner.

The Ombudsman goes on to talk about a number of other cases, including two Toronto retailers who presented themselves as winners of \$250,000—a quarter of a million dollars—through 6/49, but the details they gave of when or where they purchased the tickets "were very murky" and the corporation had evidence to contradict it. Nonetheless, these two individuals were still paid a quarter of a million dollars.

The most shocking of all, of course, happened under the watch of the McGuinty government as well: a Super 7 ticket of \$12.5 million in Burlington, a contrived story by the owner, who could not provide any information about where she purchased the ticket and denied a connection to a retailer. The corporation then discovered that she had the same last name as the retailer who had generated the free-play ticket and confirmed she was his sister. Confronted with this, she again said that she was trying to protect her privacy. Incredibly, despite the stream of evidence, the corporation paid out \$12.5 million after the ticket expired.

The minister talks about 2002. In fact, what the Ombudsman said, to correct the record, was that 2004 was "a banner year" under the McGuinty government. The Ombudsman says that 2004 "was a banner year for controversial insider prize claims." Inside the OLG, one official started citing concerns on these irregularities, and it went all the way at least to the CEO's office, if not to the office of the minister himself. Sadly, this was not pursued.

The Ombudsman, on page 22, goes on to say that in August 2004 there was a review of the process where in fact protections were watered down, as opposed to strengthened. The corporation began to justify the process of "doing even less" for security.

In August 2005, two internal memos were prepared about the insider-win problems. In fact, it was suggested that the insider-win policy would be further watered down, and it was recommended that they be dealt with as a public perception issue as opposed to a security issue. That was on March 21, 2006.

So this really got going under the McGuinty government. There was an incredible number of internal e-mails. This entered the public sphere, as we well know, in March 2005, when 60-plus print articles, and in addition significant electronic coverage, covered the issue of the Edmonds case. I really believe that the minister of the day, who was Minister Cordiano, if not the minister who took over shortly thereafter, Minister Caplan, were likely briefed on this. I asked a very direct, plain question to the minister today as to whether he'd ever been briefed on the insider-win question. He didn't even come close to responding to my question, I think, signalling that the minister was likely briefed about this.

A committee would enable us to understand if any of these memos inside the OLG had reached the minister's office. Had they reached the Premier's office? The in-

vovement of not only the three top spin doctors—they are the who's who of the Liberal Party campaign; they were the spin surgeons, as a matter of fact—begs the question of what degree of contact the Premier himself and his own staff had on this file in an attempt to cover it up. We certainly will not know the facts unless the committee has the opportunity to question the minister. I've said I would come forward and my colleague from Lanark—Carleton would come forward. I suspect that the member for York South—Weston, Mr. Cordiano, the former minister, would come forward. The only one holding out is the current minister, and the Premier is blocking that access to the committee, which makes you wonder what that minister had to hide, exactly what he knew about these internal e-mails on the acceleration of insider wins in 2005 and 2006 having reached his office, his senior staff or any of his staff.

I do hope enough members will rise in support of this motion today so that we can get to the bottom of this and get some justice for not only the Edmonds family but all those others who were ripped off in the cases described in the Ombudsman's report.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins—James Bay): I'm so excited; it's my turn. I've been looking forward to this all afternoon. No, no, I'm just joking.

I want to come at this from a bit of a different perspective in regard to some of the issues that are before us in this particular issue of the Lotterygate, as we can call it, in regard to the OLG. First of all, I will say that I will support this motion up front because I do think we do need to shine a light, as the minister responsible for gaming says—he talks about him shining a light on the issues and making sure we can get to the bottom of it. But we know that the batteries in that flashlight died a long time ago and they are not shining a light when it comes to what the issue is here.

I want to just put a couple of things on the record quickly. First of all, I really find interesting the tack that the government has taken, and specifically the Premier, in trying to argue their way around this particular thing. One of the things that they said was that these agencies are third party, and because they're third party the government can't interfere. That's the reason that we have to give them the confidence to resolve these issues themselves. That's more or less what he's saying. But if they are a third party, I'd ask myself the question, why then were the minister's staff and the Premier's staff meeting with the OLG? If you look at who was there, it was all the people who do the spin stuff. It was all the communications people.

The government is trying to have its cake and eat it too. They're trying to, on the one hand, say, "Oh, this is a third party kind of thing. It's not proper for us as a government to interfere in the running of the OLG," but on the other hand they're sending their top political staffers in to meet with the OLG because clearly they understood there was a problem.

It has probably happened to all of us, where we've walked into the corner store—you know that corner store

you go to all the time for milk and cookies for your Saturday night at the movies? You want to buy popcorn. Or you walk to the corner store and buy yourself a lottery ticket—not you young pages, because we know you don't play lotteries; you can't. But we do, we adults. You spend your three bucks and you buy your lottery ticket—and I wish I had one with me, because it's another loser, I'm sure. They've never sold me a winning ticket yet.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I don't buy them.

Mr. Bisson: I don't buy them very often, but every now and then I do.

My point is this: You buy the lottery ticket and you go, "Oh, gee, I remember I've got one in my wallet from three months ago," right? Hang on, Mr. Bradley. Come back; you've got to hear this. You give them the ticket and the machine sings, and all of a sudden they say, "Here's your five bucks." We're trustful that the clerk is not going to do anything wrong, and you walk away and you say, "Was that a different song than the one I heard before?"

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: Ah, you know what I mean. My friend who has never bought a ticket knows exactly what I'm talking about. This has happened to all of us because Canadians are trusting souls. We're people who believe in the apparatus of government and people being honest. We give our tickets, sometimes, honestly thinking that the clerk is going to make sure that everything is okay. It has happened to all of us. I know it has happened to me, where I've walked in and I've given my ticket and the machine made a different sound and they gave me 10 bucks. I went, "Jeez, I remember that the last time I won a free ticket it didn't make that funny noise. What does that mean? Was that \$500? Was that \$5,000? Was it \$5 million?" I don't know. Clearly, there's an issue here and the issue is, there isn't the kind of transparency in the system that we need to make sure those who are buying tickets are feeling totally comfortable that what they're getting in return as far as winnings is what they're entitled to.

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First of all, there's a problem, and I would just say that the OLG, in fairness to them, has tried to address some of that by taking measures such as turning the machines in such a way so that you can see the display, that your winnings or your non-winnings are worth or not worth so much. Clearly, you can go to all kinds of stores across Ontario today—gas stations, grocery stores, corner stores—and get to places where they still have old machines that only the vendor, the businessperson or the person behind the counter can read. More has to be done. The first point I'm trying to make is that the government has not made sure that the OLG has taken the steps necessary to create the kind of transparency we need in the system.

The second thing is, it's clear there's a problem here. The Ombudsman only looked at one period of time. They

didn't look at 10 or 20 years of time. They looked for a short period of time. The Ombudsman, Monsieur Marin, looked at it and said, "Here's what I found. There are cases where people won money and the clerks kept the money," or, "There are people who won money and it looks like it was internal to OLG." It's a pretty easy thing to do, right? When you stop and think about it, if a person has a winning ticket, you give the person 10 bucks and you say, "Here's the 10 bucks you won," and you give the winning ticket to somebody else—it doesn't even have to be the clerk or the store owner; it could be somebody interior to the OLG as well—and share the prize. How do we know that's not been done more times? Clearly, there's a problem.

The Ombudsman is being pretty clear about this, contrary to what the minister says. "Oh, Mr. Marin, the Ombudsman, says we've done a great job." Wow, I don't know what report he was reading because that's not what he said. There has to be a day of reckoning on this particular issue. It's important that a standing committee of this Legislature takes a look at the issues of what's happening at the OLG, for a couple of reasons: One is so we can learn from the mistakes of the past. You don't go nowhere in the future unless you understand your mistakes of the past. If you're not prepared to accept that you made a mistake, you will never learn.

I say to the minister across the way, you stand here and don't answer questions for the 160th time. We know you're good at not answering questions. But at the end of the day, the people of Ontario want to know if there was a problem, what it was, what do we learn from that and how do we stop it from happening again? That's the second part of what the committee's got to do other than just trying to find out exactly what happened: to assess and look at what needs to be done to stop those things from happening again.

I am clear about one thing. There are many people in my constituency whom I've talked to over the past number of weeks and almost months now who are quite frankly very uncomfortable about lottery sales. We heard the story where they pulled out of the lottery system—what was it? Was it the bingos or the scratch tickets? It was bingos or crossword or something like that. There's one particular draw—I was in a store just the other day, picking up some cookies and milk again. I don't eat cookies and milk, but I thought the pages would like that. Anyway, I was in a store the other day actually getting my wife a pack of cigarettes—she still smokes, believe it or not. They were saying—

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Murielle.

Mr. Bisson: Yes, Murielle smokes. She's trying to quit. It's tough. Maybe if she goes—anyway, let's just not go there. I'm going to get in trouble with my wife, and God knows, you don't want me getting in trouble with my wife.

The story is, I'm in the store the other day and the clerk says to me that they pulled a whole raft of tickets because they found out that certain people were able to

read the codes on the tickets to find out which were winning tickets and which were losing scratch tickets before anybody was ever able to scratch and win.

The system is not completely infallible. We need to make sure that if there is going to be gaming in the province of Ontario, at least it be fair. That's one of the things that this motion is trying to get at: Let's assess what the problem is, find out what went wrong, correct it so it doesn't happen again and make those recommendations that give the system some clarity.

I think this is a reasonable motion on the part of the official opposition. I say to the government, if you don't vote for this motion, then clearly you've got something to hide. It's as simple as that. This is an up-and-down issue. If the government has nothing to hide, call it into committee and let's do what has to be done. At the end of the day, the government controls the committees. We all know that the government will have a majority on the committee and you will be able to control what happens as far as agenda to a great degree. I just say to the—

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: Well, that's probably a good thing. But anyways, the point is that the government should try to show the public they've got nothing to hide.

I want to talk about the OLG in regards to a couple of other issues. My good friends in the opposition aren't going to get too mad at me for taking my time to talk about a couple of other issues related to the OLG.

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: You are, but it's my time.

There is something that frustrates me and probably frustrates many members out here, and that is the difficulty that good, honest, hard-working business people have in being able to get the support they need out of the OLG. If you own a small store in your community and you and your husband just invested all of your hard-earned money to start up that corner store, and you want to be able to get a machine in order to sell the Lotto 6/49 and the rest of it, you've got to go on a waiting list for almost two years to get one, right?

So you say, you know, if everybody was treated the same, that would be one thing. I wouldn't like it, but I'd understand. But if you're Petro-Canada, the A&P or any large corporation, they give you a machine—snap—like that. When I found out that was part of the policy in the province of Ontario, I shook my head. The government is there for what? It's there to make sure the small business people of this province are supported properly. How does it make any sense that the government, by way of its policies at the OLG, says, "If Petro Canada walks through the door, we're going to give them a lottery terminal—snap—like that," but if mom or pop, who walks in through the door, says, "I have invested my hard-working dollars in order to start up my own business," they've got to go on a waiting list for two years? You're saying there's a rule for the big and there's a rule for the small: Stick it to the small guy, give it to the big guy. I'm just saying that Liberals are supposed to be the ones who care about the little guy. But I'll tell you, in

practice, they're not. I say to the minister across the way, you should do what is right.

I have a case right now: Mountjoy Variety in the city of Timmins. There are others in my riding I've had to deal with in the past, but this is the last one—no, it's actually Commercial Variety; Mountjoy was another one. They basically started up a store that was closed down. It was one that was defunct. So we knew there was a terminal there before, and it was a good sales area; they did really well. The store had gone bankrupt because of the people before, not because of the volume of business; they just had a hard time running a business. They basically closed it down. These people bought the business and they can't get themselves a terminal.

I say to the minister across the way, wake up and smell the coffee. Help the little guy every now and then. Those are hard-working people trying to make a living, and you're saying that you're going to give Petro-Canada and the A&P carte blanche when it comes to treatment, but when it comes to helping the small mom-and-pops of this world, you're not going to help them. I just say that is a wrong part of policy.

The other thing I want to get to in this particular debate is what this means to people. Ce qui est clair est que, quand on a la chance de parler aux citoyens à travers la province sur cette question, on voit parfois les discussions qui se passent aux cafés ou dans n'importe quelle place où le monde se rencontre. Le monde trouve ça vraiment un peu dégueulasse dans le sens que le gouvernement essaie de nous dire qu'il n'y a rien de mal avec le système tel quel.

Tout ce que je peux vous dire est que le monde à la maison, chez nous comme chez vous, les autres députés de l'Assemblée, ne l'accepte pas. Ce qui est très clair est qu'il y a un problème. Le public ne sait pas exactement où est le problème, mais ils savent qu'il y a quelque chose de mal parce qu'ils ont tous eu l'expérience. Ils sont tous rentrés chez un dépanneur à un point, et comme ils ont vu la machine chanter, on leur a donné un beau 10 \$, puis ils ont dit qu'ils ont peut-être gagné un billet gratuit, et ils sont sortis de l'établissement ne sachant jamais s'ils ont gagné l'argent. Il y a beaucoup de monde qui m'ont téléphoné et qui m'ont dit, « Gilles, on a besoin de la transparence. »

Une dame—je ne me rappelle pas son nom de famille—m'a téléphoné juste la semaine passée. Elle était en colère complète, et elle a dit que ça fait depuis le début de ces loteries qu'elle joue les mêmes chiffres chaque semaine. Elle joue toujours les mêmes chiffres depuis 10, 12, 15 ou 20 ans. Je ne sais pas depuis quand ces loteries-là sont en place, mais elle a dit qu'elle joue depuis le début. Et elle a dit, « Moi, j'ai peur d'acheter mon billet parce que ça fait longtemps que j'attends pour gagner. Je me demande, premièrement, est-ce que mon numéro a déjà gagné ? S'il a gagné, c'est possible que je ne le sais pas et que j'ai été volé. Numéro deux, si quelque chose arrive dans le futur, comment est-ce que je peux savoir que les affaires vont être claires que j'ai gagné, oui ou non ? » Donc, elle a fait une suggestion très

simple. Elle a dit, « Pourquoi ne pas faire ce qu'on faisait dans le passé où chaque semaine, avec le vieux Wintario, on faisait publiquement à la télévision le tirage lui-même ? » Elle a dit, « Au moins là, je peux m'asseoir avec mon billet à la maison et je peux regarder : le numéro trois, le numéro cinq, le numéro 26, etc. » Et elle pourrait apprendre si elle est gagnante ou non en regardant la télévision.

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J'ai trouvé que c'était une solution simple. Ce n'est pas dur à faire. On peut le faire sur Internet. Ce n'est pas un gros investissement pour être capable de le faire sur Internet. Même, on pourrait utiliser les postes du parlement ici. Nous autres, on a un poste de télévision; on pourrait le montrer là-dessus, peut-être. Mais j'ai trouvé que c'était une solution qui était demandée, qui est assez simple et quelque chose, peut-être, qui pourrait être fait pour faire de la transparence.

Je vais arrêter mon débat à ce point-là parce que je sais qu'il y a une députée qui veut parler pour une couple de minutes là-dessus. Je vous remercie beaucoup, mes amis à l'opposition, pour cette motion. Sachez que le parti NPD va vous supporter sur cette motion parce qu'il est important qu'il y ait une transparence dans cette question et qu'on vient au bout de la question une fois pour toutes.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion):

I'm not going to support this motion for a number of reasons. First of all, I don't know if members remember the old movie Groundhog Day, where Bill Murray wakes up every day and it's the same old, same old thing. That's exactly what's happening with John Tory. It's rather a sad indictment of his leadership and of the Conservative Party that they have ignored the great issues that face our province: health care, education, economic prosperity, jobs. They haven't asked one single question about any of those issues in the last several weeks, and they boast and brag about the fact that they've asked 130 questions. Well, they've got 130 answers. They've been consistent answers, and they've been consistent with the fact that we believe, on this side of the House—we have greater confidence in the Ombudsman, an independent officer of this Parliament, KPMG and the Ontario Provincial Police. We're not interested in the partisan sideshow that Mr. Tory seems to be grasping on to, and, quite frankly, it's not resonating with the public.

I've had a grand total of one call in my constituency office. My colleague for Ottawa-Vanier has had no calls on this issue. I have a booth every month with my federal counterpart, Mr. Baird, at Carlingwood Mall. We were at Carlingwood Mall last month. We had probably 500 or 600 people come by our booth. Not one single person asked me about this lottery issue, but right in front of me was the lotto booth at Carlingwood Mall. They were lined up around the corner buying their tickets.

The public has confidence in the system because we have taken action to address the problems that we inherited when Mr. Hudak was the minister responsible for the OLGC. We have already accepted the Ombuds-

man's 60 recommendations, along with the KPMG. Seventeen have been implemented, 25 will be in place by the end of June, and the remaining 18 will be in place as soon as possible.

The fact of the matter is that we on this side of the House have a different set of priorities. We're interested, as was evident in our budget, in continuing our quest to improve health care.

Let me talk just for a moment about our situation in Ottawa. The previous government, as we all know, closed the Riverside hospital; they closed the Grace Hospital; they tried to close the Montfort Hospital; they tried to close the CHEO cardiac unit. That is their legacy. We, on the other side, believe, as opposed to asking 130 or 140 questions—the same question, time and time again, by the leader and his party—our priorities remain: improving the health care situation. For instance, in my riding, the Queensway Carleton Hospital is going through a massive renaissance and expansion.

I am so proud that in Minister Sorbara's budget we have increased the health care budget to allow a satellite operation for the regional cancer centre at the Queensway Carleton Hospital and the General site of the hospital. That is going to cut in half wait times for those individuals in our community who need chemotherapy, radiation and cancer surgery.

Yet on April 10 of this year, the Conservative caucus and those members from eastern Ontario voted against funding the regional cancer centre expansion which was included in Minister Sorbara's budget, and that is a real shame. We've got to put these kinds of things, such as partisanship, aside and recognize that for far too long we've not had the capacity to properly deal with cancer patients. They're under enough stress without having to wait long periods of time.

Dr. Hartley Stern and others have said, "The wait time issue is directly as a result of not enough capacity in Ottawa," and we're dealing with that in this budget. Have we had any questions on that particular aspect of the budget from the Conservative Party? Not one single one.

We've also, I think, been very fair and generous with the city of Ottawa: \$60 million going to the city of Ottawa; \$47 million going to transit funding; we're putting money into community centres throughout the city; we're putting money into housing; and we're putting money into those kinds of projects that are going to have a meaningful impact on the residents of the city of Ottawa that I so proudly represent.

Finally, one of the things I want to say in defence of the OLG is how proud we have been to work with them on the Quest for Gold program, which is a lottery program designed to help amateur athletes in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Yakabuski: Are you proud of the minister's conduct in this?

Hon. Mr. Watson: The member from Pembroke may laugh at amateur athletes and sportspeople in this province, but we are very proud—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke might want to consider withdrawing a certain word that he used.

Mr. Yakabuski: I withdraw that.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I'm sure the amateur athletes would be very impressed with that kind of vulgarity in the Legislature.

The fact of the matter is that program is helping amateur athletes more than any other program that the government of Ontario has brought forward. Literally thousands of athletes have been assisted by that program and it's something that we're particularly proud of.

The fact of the matter is that there are more important and pressing issues facing the Legislature, facing the people of this province, than asking question after question, basically repeating themselves time and time again, on an issue that we have dealt with. We inherited a mess from the previous government. They didn't have the decency to apologize to Mr. Edmonds, the gentleman who first brought this issue to light back under the watch of Mr. Hudak. We have not only apologized, we've also brought about sensible and responsible reforms to ensure that these kinds of problems do not happen again.

I am proud of our government's response and Mr. Caplan's response. I ask the opposition to start dealing with the priorities of the people—health care, education, job creation. These are the kinds of priorities of the people who come to my constituency office time and time again, not the kinds of issues that Mr. Tory and his party seem to think are on the front burner of the constituents of this great province. Let's deal with some of these issues, because we don't have all the answers. We welcome some input on how we can continue to improve health care and education in the province of Ontario. Let's get back to the substance of the issues at hand, as opposed to simply bringing this issue up time and time again and, quite frankly, turning their backs on the Ombudsman, turning their backs on KPMG and simply saying, "We don't have confidence in the OPP." This side of the House does have confidence in the Ombudsman, does have confidence in the recommendations of KPMG and we think the right place for this issue to be dealt with, if there are any illegal improprieties, is with the OPP.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I'm happy to rise today to discuss the standards of integrity, accountability and responsibility, which, despite the comments made by the Minister of Health Promotion, are issues that are important to Ontarians and that they rightfully expect their government to adhere to.

It goes without saying that in any profession—and, I would argue, possibly most importantly in government—people should be held to account for their actions. So it's incredibly ironic to me that in a role intended purely to serve the people, a role in which these standards of integrity, accountability and responsibility should apply to the strictest degree, this government has decided that closing its doors to public scrutiny and taking teeth out of

measures to hold it directly to account is somehow an acceptable practice.

Of course, when we feel these standards slipping, the role of the opposition is to do everything it can to ensure that people such as Mr. Edmonds of Coboconk and all constituents across the province are given a voice to be heard by their government. That is why, over the past weeks, we have given Premier McGuinty and the minister responsible for the lottery over 140 chances to answer these voices, notwithstanding their repeated attempts to dodge our efforts.

Despite our efforts, this government has continually refused to come clean to the people of Ontario regarding the detail of the OLG scandal and what the Premier and his minister responsible for lotteries knew and when they knew it, and that is what has led us to file this opposition day motion today.

By tabling this motion, we are giving the Premier and his minister yet another chance to do the right thing. They've had 140 chances to do it. This is an opportunity for them to do it now. By voting in favour of this motion, the Premier would be showing an actual willingness to be transparent and accountable with respect to what goes on in his office and in his minister's office. It would—I'm quoting from Ian Urquhart's column, published April 11 in the *Toronto Star*—"be in keeping with a Liberal election promise to re-empower the Legislature and restore meaning to the role of backbench MPPs."

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There are additional reasons why an inquiry led by a committee of the Legislative Assembly makes sense as the best possible way to move forward on this issue. Among them is the fact that there's certainly a precedent for this matter; there have been committees that have led inquiries in the past. But this is also a matter that could be carried out at much less cost than a judicial inquiry, and I think that would be something of importance to the government in fulfilling its responsibility to all Ontarians. The average cost of a committee of the Legislative Assembly to conduct an inquiry is approximately \$175,000, which is a mere fraction of what judicial inquiries would cost, some of which cost many millions. Some have cost upwards of \$25 million.

However, the single most important argument for an inquiry by a standing committee of this assembly, ironically, has been one of the government's own making. Ontarians will simply not tolerate cover-ups by their government. This message has been heard loud and clear, but it is also clear that Dalton McGuinty's government completely ignored suspicions of fraudulent lottery claims until the Ombudsman's report was made public. As recently as the fall of 2006, the McGuinty Liberals downplayed the problem and were content to let the OLG simply investigate itself. This egregious behaviour is simply unacceptable. The fact is that it is evident to Ontarians all across the province that this government is trying to spin its way out of this mess by covering up their complete abdication of responsibility for the public trust.

We began our questioning weeks ago. However, with every question come three more. The further we dig, it becomes more and more obvious that we cannot ignore our responsibility to further investigate this matter. The only responses we've received from the Premier and his minister are facts that have already been related to us by the Ombudsman. Although we're grateful for the Ombudsman's investigation into this scandal, the fact of the matter is that the very report the minister uses as a shield to deflect our inquiries is only the beginning.

It's our duty to uphold the standards of integrity, accountability and responsibility in this Legislature. I would suggest that the ministers and all the members of the McGuinty government take this responsibility seriously and support this motion.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): It's an honour for me to stand here this afternoon and participate in this debate. I just want to echo what I think a number of my colleagues said about what has been put forward today: that not only are we on this side of the House not going to be supporting the motion, but at the same time I think we're actually very disappointed in the activity and what has been going on in the House over the past few weeks. A lot of it, unfortunately, has become almost personal towards the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Before getting to the substance of the motion, I just want to say what an honourable member of the Legislature I think Mr. Caplan is in all he has done as the minister. I think of my own riding and his support for a lot of the planning that has gone on, his support for infrastructure programs like the light rail transit, the rapid transit system in Waterloo region. I think of what he's done across this province in terms of \$30 billion in infrastructure, addressing a deficit that unfortunately we inherited from the previous government.

At the core of what we're talking about today is the very simple fact that the people of Ontario want to make sure that the problems that exist within the Ontario gaming system, within the Ontario lottery system, are addressed. That's what the bottom line is. They're sick and tired of the partisan catcalling that they're hearing from across the way. The simple fact is, as other members have pointed out, that we inherited the mess from the previous government and we've taken action, as has been brought to our attention by the Ombudsman, to address that. We ordered third-party investigations by KPMG, and we will be instituting all of their recommendations.

We've had the Ombudsman, as an independent officer of this Legislature, investigate. I read a quote here from the Ombudsman: "I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change."

The simple fact is, the people of Ontario want to make sure that the concerns and problems that were raised are being addressed and under the leadership of the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, they are being addressed. If this opposition wants to talk about trans-

parency, if they want to talk about accountability, I only ask them to look back on their own record on the \$5.6-billion deficit which we inherited that they hid from the people of Ontario. I also look at the measures we brought forward to make sure that the Auditor General takes a look at the books and in the process of the next election all the people of Ontario know the current state. That's accountability; that's transparency.

I'm ashamed that the opposition party that brings forward this motion today voted against that particular piece of legislation. I will have no problem standing in this House and voting against this motion. It's a waste of this Legislature's time and it's an attack upon the integrity of a very fine parliamentarian, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. Yakubski: It's an honour to speak to this motion brought forward by our leader John Tory, as well.

What does this McGuinty Liberal government have against the truth? That's the whole premise behind this motion, to refer this issue to a legislative committee so that we no longer have 130, 140, 150, 160 questions go unanswered on the part of the minister. The Ombudsman's authority does not go into the minister's office; it only goes to a certain extent. That is what we're asking, that this Legislature, which would be totally consistent with the positions that Dalton McGuinty took when he was Leader of the Opposition—he demanded that items like this be referred to a legislative committee. All of a sudden, now that he's the Premier, he does not want to shed the light of day. Why the inconsistency? Why the change of heart? It is only a matter of human nature that people must believe that if you don't want to follow your own beliefs with regard to a situation today relative to a situation yesterday, then you must have something to hide. That is the concern of this party and this Legislature.

We don't have the power to compel the minister to answer questions in the House but a legislative committee would be able to get to the bottom of this so that we could move on. For the sake of the people of the province of Ontario, it is important that we do move on; for the integrity of the system; for the belief that the lottery system is set up in this province to support many important charities; and also to give people an opportunity to perhaps strike it rich or, in some smaller degree, win some money as a result of a lottery win. We have to be able to believe in the integrity of that system. The first step in order to get there—accepting the fact that we called for the minister's resignation; we're obviously not going to get that. We need to have this inquiry so that the Legislature can get to the bottom of it.

My colleague from Lanark—Carleton and my colleague from Erie—Lincoln have already said they're more than willing to come before this committee to answer any and all questions put before them. Why is the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal refusing to do so? I think it is imperative. If this House is supposed to work the way the people believe it should work, then this motion should be supported not just by the people on this side of

the House but by the people on both sides of the House so that we can put this matter behind us and Ontarians can again begin to trust the lottery system.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Sault Ste. Marie—excuse me, Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): You're not going to say next that Thunder Bay is North Bay, are you, Mr. Speaker? Then you'll get me really excited.

The Deputy Speaker: I apologize.

Mr. Mauro: That's okay. You don't have to apologize.

I'm happy to speak to this issue and support the comments of others who have spoken on this issue already this evening. We don't have a lot of time left and I will be leaving some time on the clock for one of our other members to do a wrap-up for our party.

A very important issue; happy to be here and be part of the debate on what at its very core, I think, is an issue of public trust in public institutions, institutions that bring in about \$6 billion in revenues for the government of the day, that leave them with net money of about \$2 billion or \$3 billion, I guess, depending on how you look at it. So it is a large issue and at the core of it, it's about public trust and public institutions. I'm happy to speak to that today. I have no problem with that and I have no problem with people bringing it up and wanting to discuss it.

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However, I think the problem with the opposition day motion is that, in fact, that's not what we're doing here today. I don't see that what we're discussing here today is about restoring public trust at all. If you view what's gone on since this issue first came to light, I think it's very easy to make the case that that's not what we're doing here today. That's not what the opposition motion is intending to do. It has been stated in the Legislature often and many times that ticket sales are not lagging. There is no evidence from the public that by what has happened in the last little while they have lost trust in this situation, and certainly they haven't lost trust in the government. If you look at what we've done on our side of the House, as has been stated often with the KPMG report, with the Ombudsman report and with the OPP, to suggest that there's been a lack of effort and movement on this issue from us on this side of the House is, I would say, not putting out there the facts as most people seem to see them.

This is purported to be about restoring faith and confidence in the integrity of Ontario's lottery system. Unfortunately, I don't see that at all as what this resolution is doing. What I think it's doing is playing that tired old game of "gotcha" politics that has existed, I suppose, down here for a lot of years. I haven't been here for many—three and a half. I often see, bleeding through the discussion, history—the history that individual members have with other members. That's what I see at the root of a lot of this. I wasn't here during those days, and I can tell you as a first-time MPP with three and a half years in here now, it becomes more apparent the longer

you're around this place why some things happen, as they say, the way they do.

When the leader of the official opposition came to this House, I remember listening very carefully, as I'm sure others did, that it was his full intention that he was going to do things in a different way, that he was not going to conduct business as it had been previously conducted, that there would be a different expectation from his caucus and that he hoped that would bleed over into the other caucuses that are represented in this Legislature. I don't see it here today. I paid close attention to those words and I respected those words because I hoped and felt that was necessary in this Legislature as well.

Unfortunately, as I see it, people can't put the history behind them. I don't think there are enough people in this place who are able to let the past go. When they see an issue like this, and with an election only six months away, suddenly there seems to be an opportunity here for those words that were often repeated in the Legislature by the Leader of the Opposition to no longer be as important as they were when he first arrived here as a fresh face bringing new ideas and excitement and enthusiasm. But it appears to me that the reality of an election has somewhat changed his approach to how this is going to occur.

I read the Ombudsman's report. I saw what it said about Mr. Rutherford in 1993. Who was the government in 1993? The NDP. That happened 14 years ago. I read it; it's in there. It shouldn't be news to anybody. What changed as a result of the Rutherford experience? Nothing, as far as I can tell. I read the Ombudsman's report and saw what he detailed about Mr. Edmonds. What changed as a result of the experience of Mr. Edmonds? Nothing, as far as I can see. In fact, the member for Erie-Lincoln, when asked by the press what he did about it, said, "I did nothing." When they asked him why, he said because he didn't know about it. Fair enough. But apparently there's a different expectation on us than there was on them. They are having a hard time understanding or believing that our minister and our government didn't know about it, and he says he didn't. Mr. Edmonds's case was splashed all over the place. The Rutherford case was splashed all over the place. So going back 14 or 15 years, two high-profile cases, and we're expected to believe that they didn't know anything about it and that in 15 years they didn't have an opportunity to react to it. Clearly, not the case.

They put the Edmonds and Rutherford questions aside. Why didn't they act on it? They chose not to do it. They knew about it and they chose not to do it, and now they want to put a different expectation on us in the House. I'm sorry; the members opposite who bring this forward, many of them who are normally loquacious, who are normally verbose—if I can put it as politely as possible—have been conspicuous by their silence on this issue and have tried to place a different standard on our members than the one that they undertook when they were in government for eight or nine years.

Those are the facts; it's clear. I guess this is about the first rule of advertising: You continue to try to repeat the same message as often as you can and you hope that it sinks into the consciousness of the people that are listening. Well, it's not working. There's no traction on this issue where I live, and if you talk to most people around the province, there's not a lot of traction where they live either. But they'll continue to try. There's an election six months away and they're looking for issues. I don't blame them for that, but I see this one a little bit differently. We all need issues as we go into campaigns. This is a little different. This is about public trust and public institutions. I have no problem debating that, but there's ample evidence to suggest that, historically, both opposition parties had issues that would have brought this to the forefront, that they should have known about it and acted upon, and they did not. They did not.

I had a lot of respect for the people in this place when I came here—I still do—but the hypocrisy of this situation cannot be left unaddressed. I'm happy to speak to it.

Interjection.

Mr. Mauro: Yes, the hypocrisy of the situation—

The Deputy Speaker: Perhaps the member can choose another word. Just by way of explanation, I don't think that he was saying anybody was hypocritical, it was the situation, but a less severe word would be helpful.

Mr. Mauro: I will respond to that, Speaker. It wasn't pointed at any individual but at the situation. But I will retract the phrase "hypocrisy of the situation" and suggest that perhaps there seems to be a different way of approaching it for us when we're in government than they did when they were in government.

Speaker, I have much more I'd love to say. I will yield the floor. We have at least one other member who's willing to speak.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I continue to advocate for a legislative committee. We have to track the flow of information between the OLG, Minister Caplan's office and Dalton McGuinty with respect to this lottery scandal and the attempt at a cover-up. It really is unfortunate that Ontario has reached this point. It used to be that a scandal would be a shocking incident, something that would surprise, but in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario suddenly it's no big deal. It's almost as if it's business as usual.

We all remember last year Dalton McGuinty entered uncharted waters. He allowed Transportation Minister Takhar to remain in cabinet despite violating the integrity act. Now, with Lottogate, lottery minister Caplan has been allowed to remain in cabinet in the wake of a \$100-million scandal and this attempt at a cover-up.

I'm not sure what is worse, turning a blind eye to the theft of up to \$100 million or covering up once you find out. Either way, it's clear to me the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal can't clean house. They can't deal with this under the current leadership. How could they deal with this? Minister Caplan appears to me to be part of the problem.

It is telling that Dalton McGuinty is adamantly opposed to an investigation. If there's nothing to hide, as he claims, why would they not welcome an investigation? If anything, we would want a committee to clear the air, to exonerate the minister, to exonerate the Premier.

Just a brief word about the money that was stolen under Minister Caplan's watch, up to \$100 million. That's the same amount of gambling money that's guaranteed annually to charities through the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Again, I guess that's the way it goes in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario: one gambling dollar for charity, one gambling dollar for a scandal, \$2 for charity, \$2 for a scandal. And that does not include the money spent on legal fees so that this McGuinty government can take victims to court.

Let's get to the bottom of this. Let's have an investigation. Strike a committee.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I have to tell you that people watching at home today, people who have been watching this Legislature over the last two or three weeks are going to be very disappointed in the fact that somebody who strode into this Legislature with a holier-than-thou attitude, saying he was better than all of us, was going to bring civility to this place, has lowered himself so far down now that he would be making innuendoes, putting forward information that's simply not true and suggesting that a minister who has been verified—

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Mr. Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe the standing orders provide that you cannot say anything indirectly that you wouldn't be allowed to say directly. I think the member has made a comment that implies something that would never be allowed directly.

The Deputy Speaker: You're correct about the standing orders. I didn't hear anything that was in that way.

The member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr. Duguid: Mr. Speaker, if I said anything that offended the member, I'll withdraw it. I don't recall saying anything that would have.

The fact of the matter is, when Mr. Tory came to this place, he said—and I remember the day. I remember picking up the Toronto Star and seeing an opinion piece. He said this: "It's time for a new approach to proceedings in the Ontario Legislature, one that puts substance ahead of style, truth ahead of theatre, accountability ahead of blame." Let me repeat that: "Substance ahead of style." What have we seen here over the last three weeks? From the Leader of the Opposition we've seen the exact opposite. "Truth ahead of theatre." My goodness, over the last three weeks what have we seen here? Nothing but theatre, ignoring the facts, ignoring the fact that the Ombudsman said the following: "I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate"—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay folks, let's keep going. We're getting near the end. I'd like a little order.

The member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr. Duguid: The facts have been put forward very coherently by the Ombudsman, who said: "I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change." He also said, "I'm happy to see that both the government and the OLG appear to be headed in the right direction." Those are facts. That's a third-party assessment of what's been going on here over the last little while, totally ignored by the Leader of the Opposition, when he'd get up and talk as though these things were never said. That is not an appropriate way to do politics.

There are people out there—

Interjection.

Mr. Duguid: I know. I'm from Scarborough Centre. I can tell you that the people in my area know, when they see people behaving in that manner—they believe that when somebody says they're going to do something, when somebody preaches to everybody else that we're not as good as them, that they're better than us and they're going to bring civility to this place, and then they come here and do the exact opposite—there is a word for those kinds of people and it is unparliamentary. I'm not going to say it, Mr. Speaker, but there's certainly a word for it. You look comfortable there; I don't want you to have to get up again, so I won't say it, Mr. Speaker, but you've got to know what I'm thinking; you've got to know what the people of Ontario are thinking and you've got to know what everybody in this place is thinking when they see that kind of behaviour from the Leader of the Opposition.

When I think about it, what's going on here? Is it that John Tory is recognizing that things aren't going so well for him? Is he recognizing that the people of Ontario like the direction this government is going in in health care, like the direction this government is going in in education, like the investment we're making in infrastructure, like the things we're doing to make this a safer province, like the fact that we've balanced their budget, like the fact that we're investing in programs that are assisting those who are more vulnerable and he can't get any traction for anything he's trying to do, so he's changing his tactics? Some might think that's the case, that the guy who came here and preached civility is going in the opposite direction because he's changing his tactics. That could be true.

I would suggest that may not be the case. I would suggest that what's happening here is that the Leader of the Opposition's true colors are coming out. I can remember back—how many years ago was it when Kim Campbell was running to be Prime Minister of this country? What was it that brought her down? Do you remember that negative ad that made fun of Jean Chrétien's facial disability? Do you remember who had to approve that ad? The Leader of the Opposition. Maybe what's happening here is that his true colours are coming out. The heat is on, we're close to an election campaign, so he feels he has to smear the Minister of Public Infra-

structure Renewal to try to score some cheap political points. He has tried to smear that minister and he has had no success doing it, and we can see right through him—

Mr. Yakubuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member for Scarborough Centre has plainly stated that the Leader of the Opposition has tried to smear the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. I do not believe that that would be parliamentary.

The Deputy Speaker: There's a lot that's being said in here that borders on not being parliamentary, so I think all of us should pay very close attention to the use of the English language in the best way that we can and in respect for the other members.

Mr. Duguid: In the 30 seconds that I have left—obviously I am partisan in this issue, as we all are here, so I'm going to put forward my views in my words. But let me quote from somebody who's non-partisan, who's respected, who has been here a lot longer than I've been here: Ian Urquhart, a very well-respected reporter with the Toronto Star. This is what he said: "This is 'gotcha' politics at its worst.

"First of all, the lottery corporation is an arm's-length agency, deliberately established to be remote from political control.

"Secondly, if" the minister had "known about the problem earlier, then so should have his Conservative predecessors.

"After all"—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark—Carleton): I hesitate to follow a member who showed such integrity in his remarks. This is a very, very serious issue because it is about the integrity of a system that affects many Ontarians. The government seems to be bound and determined that they're going to stonewall this issue into the ground.

I think it's important to trace the history with regard to this particular issue. The issue really came to public knowledge—and therefore to political knowledge, I would imagine—in March 2005, at least as far as this side of the House was concerned. I would say that as a former minister who was responsible for the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, which is the regulatory part and doesn't run the lottery corporation, and I would say that as the minister responsible for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. for eight short months in 2003, when none of this litigation was active. The real point of when this would have come to the knowledge of the politicians would have been in March 2005, when 81 news stories hit down in the press. It is inconceivable that a minister would not be notified of this political storm out there. The stonewalling that we have received from the minister and the Premier on this issue is unbelievable. We cannot believe that their positioning that they didn't hear about it until October 2006 is credible.

I'm also aware of a lot of the facts around this particular case. I understand, for instance, that in 2004 the OPP were ready to go into the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. There was a 100-page affidavit drafted by

the OPP. The team was put together, ready to go into the OLG, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. Then, all of the sudden, it stopped dead in its tracks. Why? Why did it stop? Did the minister who was responsible for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. stop it at that time? Did the Premier's political staff, who seem to have known about this particular issue for a lot longer than the minister, stop the investigation in 2004? What happened? I think it's incumbent on us in the Legislature to tell the public exactly why this happened, because if the rot had stopped in the OLG in 2004, all of these frauds that took away millions of dollars from Ontario citizens would not have happened. We need, at the very least, a committee of this Legislature to look into this.

I also want to point out that I've been trying to get the memorandum of understanding between the minister of infrastructure, Mr. Caplan, and the OLG for over two weeks now. I know that in September of last year there was no memorandum of understanding. That was told to the committee that was investigating at that time.

I have been stonewalled even today by the minister to give me a copy of what is a public document, according to his deputy minister, Ms. Layton, who told the public accounts committee on March 29 that these were public documents. I cannot get a copy of the up-to-date memorandum of understanding between the minister and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. I suspect, notwithstanding a Management Board directive requiring such a document, that there is no document.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Of course, with just a minute left, I'll be supporting this opposition day motion by our leader, a man whom I respect a tremendous amount. I was very disappointed to hear the member for Scarborough Centre try to smear him in this House. As somebody who's trying to bring integrity to this Legislature by looking at an opposition day motion to look at it in the Legislative Assembly—and he gets smeared because he wants integrity. There's something awful with that. Do you know what it reminds me of? It reminds me of Jean Chrétien holding that golf ball and making fun of Gomery. That's what it reminds me of. That's the same level we're at.

They don't know what integrity is all about; they don't know what honesty is all about. They think this is okay. They really believe that this is proper conduct. This minister is overseeing a scandal and he should step aside and resign, and at the very least this House should vote in support of this opposition day motion. It's needed by the people of Ontario, it's called for by the people of Ontario, and I'd be extremely disappointed if you folks would not support this.

You know what? This is not going away. Remember that, ladies and gentlemen: It's not going away. Remember, you'll hear about it in October.

I will sit down, but remember, it's not going away.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? There being no further debate, Mr. Tory has moved opposition day number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1742 to 1752.

The Deputy Speaker: Members, please take your seats. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Ferreira, Paul
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea

Hudak, Tim
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Tory, John
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Chan, Michael
Craitor, Kim
Dhillon, Vic
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter

Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.

Oraziotti, David
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 29; the nays are 48.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

This House is adjourned. We'll return at 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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No. 157B

N° 157B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 16 April 2007

Lundi 16 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 16 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 16 avril 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 155, An Act to provide for a referendum on Ontario's electoral system, when Bill 155 is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That there shall be no deferral of any vote allowed pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Bradley has moved government order number 324. Mr. Bradley.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I will be sharing my time with a number of members of the government caucus, and they will be standing to speak at the present time, I understand. So the members of the government who are standing to speak on this will stand.

The Acting Speaker: There is no sharing. Either you have to speak or I go in rotation.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I understand.

The Acting Speaker: So you're not speaking? Further debate? Is there any further debate?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Good evening. Sorry, you caught me a little off guard. I thought I was coming in about an hour.

Before I begin discussing the importance of this bill, I'd like to take a minute to thank each and every member of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform and their chair, George Thompson, for all the dedication and hard work. I'd also like to acknowledge, if I may be permitted, the citizens' assembly members from the Hamilton area: Rosemarie Arsenault from Hamilton East; Frank O'Grady from Hamilton West; Susan Tiley from Stoney Creek; Jeff Witt from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot; and, last but not least, Jennie Stakich, the

member from Hamilton Mountain, who said she was excited to be chosen because she thought the process would be very interesting.

I hope that the last seven months since the first meeting of the citizens' assembly took place was as exciting and rewarding as expected.

The selection process for the assembly members first began almost one year ago, on April 25, 2006, when invitation letters were mailed to over 120,000 randomly selected Ontarians. From there, 12,000 responded and 1,200 were invited to selection meetings across the province. One hundred and three members were chosen, one from each of Ontario's ridings: 52 women and 51 men. Once again, congratulations on all their hard work.

This bill that we are speaking about this evening is a testament to the hard work that was done by this citizens' assembly, and I'd like to share with you some quotes from the members about their time spent discussing and debating electoral systems.

"Participating in the citizens' assembly is my chance to have a say in the electoral process for people from northern Ontario"—Julia Craner, assembly member.

"The province is changing demographically and it is important to examine other electoral systems to see which works best"—John Toll, assembly member.

"I'm excited about participating in a committee that jointly will discuss and review the electoral process and possibly contribute to change"—Joyce Hughes, assembly member.

"The citizens' assembly is a once-in-a-lifetime experience"—Mappanar Sundrelingam, assembly member.

Finally, "I want to express this point to my fellow citizens: Elections are very important to the democracy of our country"—Zaya Abram Yonan, assembly member.

This bill represents all of the things said above by citizens' assembly members. After months of meeting every second weekend at Osgoode Hall Law School and after over 30 public forums held across the province, the citizens' assembly process is beginning to wind down.

1850

This past weekend, the citizens' assembly voted 94 to 8 in favour of recommending the mixed member proportional electoral system. Although we will not receive the citizens' assembly final report until May 15, the vote indicates that the assembly will be recommending that Ontarians be asked to decide in a referendum on whether to adopt a mixed member proportional electoral system. In order to enable that referendum on October 10, Bill 155 would be required to pass. I look forward to the final

report, which will provide much more detail and rationale behind the citizens' assembly decision.

This time allocation is fundamentally about the work of the citizens' assembly and about the process required in order to conduct a referendum. Given last weekend's decision, stakeholders and the public will expect the rules relating to the conduct of the referendum campaign and the referendum question to be made public in a timely fashion.

Pour la première fois dans l'histoire de notre province, la population aura l'occasion de participer à un débat ouvert et approfondi sur notre système électoral. C'est une occasion sans précédent pour les Ontariens et les Ontariennes d'aider à renforcer notre démocratie. Jamais un gouvernement ontarien n'a donné aux citoyens ce genre d'occasion de façonner les rouages du gouvernement. C'est un procédé sain et passionnant.

This bill has gone through a thorough and rigorous debate process. In fact, it has been debated for over 11 hours, including two days of third reading. I had the great pleasure today to answer questions from the member for Kenora-Rainy River, the leader of the third party, and to discuss some of the fundamental aspects of this bill.

We appreciate that there are groups concerned about the threshold. We have heard their arguments for a simple majority and those in support of our recommended decision rule. What we must remember is that the adoption of a new electoral system would represent a foundational change to Ontario's democracy and that a decision of this magnitude deserves to have the support of a solid majority of Ontarians across the province. The proposed legislation reflects the significance of this decision. We are requiring a consensus among the Ontario electorate and the regions of our province. We believe the people of Ontario deserve that level of certainty.

This is historic legislation. A decision to change electoral systems should not be taken lightly. Regular elections allowing citizens to choose who will represent them and govern are the foundation of our democracy, and so we have developed a referendum process so that Ontarians can make a choice on the future of the electoral system by which they elect members to this Legislature. With the establishment of a citizens' assembly and the introduction of this legislation, we're making it clear that the shape of Ontario's democracy is a matter for Ontarians to decide.

Our government believes that citizens should have a meaningful voice in shaping their democracy. That's why we created this opportunity. The very exercise of re-examining our electoral system will reinvigorate and heighten our understanding of our democratic system. It will also contribute to a strong and vibrant democracy that will serve us now and in the future.

We have also had the opportunity to participate in the formation of a Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform. They met for one weekend and mirrored for that one weekend the citizens' assembly process. One hundred and three high school students, one from each riding in

Ontario, began their weekend with a day at the Legislature, where they were able to attend question period as well as a reception that followed. Many were even able to meet their local MPP and ask any questions they had. I believe that many have kept in touch online and continue to discuss everything they have learned, and have watched closely as this bill has worked its way through the legislative process. With the assistance of the Minister of Education, we have funded a program in the schools as well where curriculum materials are available for those teachers and students who are interested in having in-school student assemblies.

Although the citizens' assembly will not submit its final report until May 15, this legislation will ensure that if a referendum is required, we have a legitimate process in place that would provide Ontarians with a clear outcome. It's up to Ontarians to decide which electoral system best reflects their values. Every voter in this province will have a chance to consider and to make the choice for themselves in this referendum, and that's what this bill is all about: a process in place for Ontarians so that they can have the final say on electoral reform. This is an important decision that deserves to have the support of a solid majority of Ontarians across the province. By participating in a referendum, Ontarians will contribute to building a strong, vital democracy for our province in the future.

This bill also went to committee. A number of individuals came and spoke to this bill. Everyday Ontarians feel passionate about this bill, and some drove across the province to be heard at these committee hearings. The committee heard a diverse array of opinions on a wide range of areas within the bill.

The citizens' assembly has invested much time and effort in making its recommendation. This legislation reflects the significance of this decision. The assembly is a new form of decision-making that is empowering citizens as never before. No government in this province has ever given citizens this kind of opportunity to shape Ontario's democracy. Citizen engagement is all about providing opportunities for Ontarians to have meaningful participation in the deliberative and decision-making process.

It is also about facilitating debate and discussion and creating forums for Ontarians to listen to one another. Processes within this bill have to be put in place in time for the next provincial election so that this referendum can take place. This bill has provisions that allow the referendum question to be written. The content of the question must be based on the citizens' assembly recommendation. This legislation ensures that the question will be presented in a manner that is clear, concise and impartial.

We are working to move towards the next steps in this democratic renewal agenda.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join the debate today on this time allocation motion to do with Bill 155, which is about setting the

threshold for the upcoming referendum that will occur on October 10, the same date as the next provincial election.

It does seem a little strange, though, that we're having a time allocation debate on a referendum bill, on a bill that's about electoral reform and democratic reform, that we're effectively ending debate on this bill by this evening's debate, because I'm sure the representatives of the third party who will speak after me will make it very clear that a number of members—I think most of their caucus—that were keen to speak to this bill and wanted to get their feelings on the record will now be denied that opportunity by this debate we're having here this evening. So it does seem a little strange that this bill is being time-allocated.

Certainly, democracy can and should be enhanced and public confidence restored by government through measures other than electoral reform, such as, to begin with, keeping campaign promises, respecting the role of individual MPPs, fixing the lack of productivity in the Legislature, improving decorum in the House, improving the flow of information to the public and the media and the opposition.

I had the opportunity to take part in the select committee on electoral reform. That committee made a number of different recommendations. The member from Lanark-Carleton, who will be speaking a little bit later this evening, and I did write a dissenting opinion to the report on electoral reform. I will get to that a little bit later, but I'd like to quote from that report. In the dissenting opinion to the report on electoral reform submitted by Mr. Sterling and myself the inevitability of the assembly recommending change was noted: "With the present lack of trust by the public in their politicians, the temptation to seek change will be virtually overwhelming. It will be difficult if not impossible for an objective assessment of the current system to be carried out due to the cynicism and distrust that has arisen towards politicians and the political process." So where we have the current government that was elected and has set a new record for broken promises, I'd say the danger with the referendum that we're about to hold this fall is that people vote to voice their displeasure with the government for having broken so many electoral promises instead of voting about the proposed changes that are being put forward by the citizens' assembly.

The minister did mention some of the members of the citizens' assembly. I did have an opportunity to meet with the representative from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Jordan Elliott, who I know took his job as one of the 103 members on that assembly very seriously and spent a lot of time on the work he did. I thank him for that, for his dedication and all the time that he spent. I know that's probably true of all the members who took part. I had the opportunity, as part of the select committee on electoral reform, to visit British Columbia and meet with some of the members involved in that process. That was long after their process was done. They were still quite involved and engaged, which is a positive thing. In their case the recommendation was for a different system than

is being proposed by the citizens' assembly here, but they were very much still engaged.

1900

I would like to point out that the select committee on electoral reform recommended that the referendum should be binding upon a vote of 50% plus one, but the government has actually decided to go with a higher threshold of 60% plus one. In light of the record of this government, their many broken promises, perhaps that is a wise thing to do so that it isn't just people voting against the record of the government, it's people voting for the proposed changes.

I note that the citizens' assembly has just come out—and there have been a lot of media reports about the suggestions they're making for a new system for electing MPPs to this place. At this point, I haven't seen the final report. I know that's due May 15. However, I would certainly like to raise some questions as to what is being proposed.

I know it's being recommended that the number of the MPPs in this place increase. I think if you went out and asked the general public how they felt about having more politicians, probably most of them would say that that's not necessarily a good thing. We would be increasing the number of politicians. I think the recommendation is to go up some 20 politicians. There are currently 103 politicians. But the number representing geographic areas, as I understand it, would go down to 90 from the current 103, and then the balance—some 39 members—would be made up from lists which the political parties would make.

Without having seen the final report, there are some questions I would like to raise at this point. I can certainly speak for rural and northern ridings. My riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka is huge at this point. For me to drive from where I live to Dokis First Nation, as an example, is a three-and-a-half-hour drive one way. So the idea of there being fewer northern ridings or larger ridings is something that I would not be thrilled about. Certainly, for me, the constituency and all the issues that come out of it are very important and they're something I spend an awful lot of time on. From my perspective, that's a big part of the reason why I am here. So getting bigger ridings is not something I would be supportive of.

The other part of it is that you have the new 39 members who come off lists to make up proportionality, based on the recommendation. Those members would not have a constituency, so I'm sure there would be a lot of people lining up for that position because I probably spend more of my time in the riding learning about issues and being accountable to the constituents of Parry Sound-Muskoka than I do down here in Toronto. It's a huge riding and I spend a lot of time getting around to meet with people, to attend events and to learn about things going on in the riding. I am accountable to those people. These 39 new MPPs would not have a constituency, would not have anyone other than the party bosses, the party leaders that they would be accountable to.

How you get on the list is something that I would wonder about as well, because we'll really hand over quite a bit of power to the parties to determine who gets on the list. Essentially, they'd be unelected because they'd be appointed to the list and then would become MPPs based on their party's percentage of the total vote. That's another thing that I would certainly wonder about. As I say, I haven't seen the final report, but those are two that I certainly would have some questions about.

Our leader, John Tory, has been pushing for parliamentary reform, and that's what was highlighted in the select committee on electoral reform dissenting opinion. John Tory has been looking to make this place function better, and specifically he's brought up making this place play its role of oversight of the finances of the province on a more significant scale. Right now we have, basically, the Minister of Finance deciding most of the financial questions of the province. You have an estimates committee, which really is more political than anything else. It doesn't in any way go through in great detail the finances of the province. I can tell you from my experience of talking to other jurisdictions that really that's one of the central roles of being a politician: to make laws and also to oversee the finances of the province. Particularly when you see the sorts of increases in spending we've seen in the last three and a half years—some \$22 billion a year or \$4,500 per household under this government—that's something that I think needs more oversight. I know when I had the opportunity to travel to the Council of State Governments and meet with some of the American representatives, they'd spend about half their time going almost line by line through the budget for their state, and have much more oversight than we do here. That's one thing we could really improve.

As well, I think that we could have the Legislature play a much greater role in terms of committee work. One of the committees that I think did an excellent job—of course, I sat on the select committee on electoral reform, but the select committee on alternative fuels was also made up of all parties and did some excellent work. Many of their recommendations were acted on. I believe that one of them, if I recall from memory, was removing the sales tax on biofuels and ethanol, so that the 14-cent provincial tax was removed by the actions of that committee. Also, with parliamentary reform, we need to enhance the role of the MPPs in this place so that they have more free votes and more say in the goings-on of Queen's Park.

I see that I've almost used up all the time I have available to speak. I know there are other things, but I would just like to say that there are a number of questions that came out of the process we've been through with the citizens' assembly. I'll look forward to the final report on the recommended option—this mixed member proportional option—the members have come out with. I think it's very, very important, though—and this was learned from the BC experience as well—that there be significant education on the question that is proposed. Certainly that was the BC experience, that there wasn't enough of an

education component for both the No and the Yes sides. Here in Ontario, I know that just in my own area on the weekend, for example, I was out speaking to people and asking them what they knew about it, and most didn't even know the process was going on. There's going to be a lot of education required for the people to be well informed so that come October 10 they'll be able to make a rational decision about whether they want to keep the current first past the post system we have now or whether they want to switch to this new proposed system, the mixed member proportional system. There will be a lot of education required in that.

Another point I wanted to talk about briefly before I close is the actual question itself. From the select committee on electoral reform, they recommended that the responsibility for the referendum question, including the wording and the number of questions to be asked and whether there would be a review, should rest with the Legislature, acting on the advice of the citizens' assembly, the select committee on electoral reform, if required, and Elections Ontario. I see that in this bill the government is actually having the cabinet make the decision on the actual question, so they didn't follow the advice, again, of the select committee on electoral reform.

I will close now and leave time for the members from Whitby–Ajax and Lanark–Carleton, who I know are going to want to make some points as well. I'd just finish by saying I would advise all those people out there who are just learning about the citizens' assembly proposal to do their best to learn as much as they can about it to help make a decision come October 10.

1910

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Thank you kindly, Speaker, and I want you to know that this brief, brief 50 minutes is going to be shared by my very capable and talented colleague Paul Ferreira, the newly elected member for York South–Weston.

What a crock of spit. This is an absolute crock of spit. And for the minister to come in here today and talk about this government's commitment to democratic reform when the debate on a critical element of that so-called reform becomes the subject matter of a guillotine motion—amazing and thoroughly repugnant.

Let's take a look at the bill itself. I find it remarkable that a minister with this minister's experience would talk about how much time has been devoted to second reading debate—11 hours. Well, I'll tell you how much time is being devoted to third reading. You know, Speaker, that amongst the mere 10 New Democrats here, only you and I have had a chance to speak to this bill. This government's time allocation motion that we're debating tonight is going to prevent any other New Democrat from speaking to Bill 155. There weren't, quite frankly, that many more Conservatives who were allowed, permitted, to speak to the bill on third reading.

We've got a government that talks about democratic reform, that talks about wanting to ensure that people are

represented in a more effective way here at Queen's Park. That's what they say. What do they do? They bring in time allocation motions and they treat this chamber with disdain, disregard and disrespect. Indeed, the government's position this evening demonstrates disgust on the part of this government for the folks in this province.

Let's understand what Bill 155 is, because the suggestion that somehow it doesn't warrant debate is a suggestion that can only be born in naïveté or a purposeful attempt to be less than candid. Let's understand very, very carefully what the government has done, the game they've played. The government knows there's an appetite out there for that broad proposal of proportional representation, and indeed the undercurrent in all of this government's talk about democratic reform, democratic reform, democratic reform was the hint of a promise of something akin to proportional representation.

What did the government deliver? It delivered a citizens' assembly. The citizens' assembly has indicated where it finds itself at the end of its discussion. And then the government pretends somehow that Bill 155 in its present form, in its existing form, is going to deliver on promises that this government made while it was in waiting, seeking election here to Queen's Park. You know, Speaker, as the member for Beaches—East York and this caucus's critic on democratic reform, democratic renewal, what a phony proposition Bill 155 is.

Let's understand very, very clearly how little power has been given to the citizens' assembly, how little power. The citizens' assembly is being hidden behind now by a gutless government that has no intention of ever effecting democratic reform. They weren't even capable of effecting democratic renewal. Indeed, they have taken this chamber and the process, this parliamentary process here in the province of Ontario, beyond limits that were ever contemplated by the most hard-line, autocratic predecessors of McGuinty and his Liberal gang here at Queen's Park.

Let me tell you what I had occasion to tell one of the journalists earlier today who asked me what I thought were the three most important things that could be done here at Queen's Park to effect meaningful reform. I said, "Well, that doesn't trouble me at all. As a matter of fact, it comes quite easily."

If a government were to acquire a greater regard for the opposition and the role of the opposition, it would be a good first start, wouldn't it? This government's disregard for the opposition is demonstrated in its dismissal of second reading debate by saying, "Oh, well, we've had 11 hours." Where, oh, where did you get the idea that somehow legislation should be rapidly processed through a Parliament? Why? Shouldn't major reforms be the product and subject matter of a thoughtful, meticulous, sometimes painfully slow process? Shouldn't they?

I told the journalist earlier today that this government, like some of its predecessor governments, doesn't understand the role of the opposition. And when you have successive governments that undermine the opposition

with rule changes, like the Baird reforms to the standing orders—remember Baird's reforms to the standing orders? It's an absolute embarrassment to this Parliament that that government would use its majority, its jackboots, to invoke standing orders that would remove all but the symbols of opposition available to the opposition.

Second is committees. Committees at Queen's Park are a joke. Government members are scripted. They're rotated, not just from day to day but throughout the course of the day. If they're not writing love letters to their girlfriends, boyfriends, mistresses, concubines, anticipated assignations for the evening, they're nodding off or reading day-old or two-day-old newspapers. You've been in the committee rooms. Or they're playing, thumbs adrumming, with their BlackBerries, embarrassed at whatever it is that they're watching because they hold them down low so that nobody can see what's on the screen.

Interjections.

Mr. Kormos: Well, think about it. Is there somebody in here using a BlackBerry right now? I want you to see what I mean. They don't hold them up so that other people can see what's on the screen. They hold them down low like they're ashamed of what they're looking at. I've seen it over and over again. And you've got members here who want to be able to bring computers into the chamber? I'll tell you what. If you want to bring computers in, let me put this to those same members: Why don't you read your legislation first, and then we'll talk about whether or not you should be bringing computers into the chamber? You don't have to read all the bills. Just read the ones that are relevant to your little portfolio. You know what I'm talking about, Mr. Ramsay. You've been here a long time.

One of the greatest delights you can ever have in this chamber is to jog by the next speaker for a given caucus and pull the briefing notes off their table just moments before they stand to address this assembly about a particular bill or piece of legislation. Now, I wouldn't think of doing that to somebody who didn't have responsibility for the bill, but as I say, it's somewhat entertaining, the prospect of doing that to somebody whose bill it was to carry, either as an opposition member or, more significantly, as a government member.

Committees—a joke and, quite frankly, an embarrassment for the public who come here. Committees sitting shorter and shorter, committee members from the government side less and less interested and engaged, no willingness whatsoever to respond meaningfully to the presentations put to them by public presenters—no interest whatsoever. They vote as they're whipped; they read as they're scripted.

1920

Then, thirdly and finally, I told the journalist that there should be a recognition that we are attached to our constituencies, that we speak for folks and that the kind of folks that one member speaks for, the kind of communities that one member represents, the kind of neighbourhoods that one member advocates for could be very

different from the kinds of families, communities and neighbourhoods that another member advocates for—a rural member versus an urban member, a big-city member versus a small-town member, a northern member versus a southern member. That's not to say that those differences are not reconcilable, but they are differences, aren't they? Why, even within caucuses those differences rear their head, don't they, and call upon members of given caucuses to find some common ground so that that caucus can speak with one voice.

But understand what Bill 155 doesn't do: Bill 155 doesn't guarantee that there will be a reform exercise engaged in here at Queen's Park by the subsequent government even if the egregiously onerous threshold is overcome. As the member from Beaches—East York, you've spoken about that many times, haven't you, Speaker? You've railed about it, and with good cause. This super-majority is designed to fail, but even if it weren't to fail, what is the obligation of the subsequent government after a successful referendum based on what Bill 155 tells us? What is the obligation of a successive government to introduce legislation that reflects the proposal approved in the referendum?

And that's it, isn't it, Speaker? If I'm wrong, call me out of order. Feel free. If I'm even this far away from the truth on this one, stand up right here and now and shut me down. Do you understand what I'm saying, Speaker?

Appreciate that, because the reality is that Bill 155 doesn't in any way, shape or form assure Ontarians, whether they're farmers, whether they're teachers like the OECTA members who are here at Queen's Park this evening talking to MPPs about the need for more resources in our schools across Ontario, or whether they're retirees or factory workers who have just lost their jobs—like over 140,000 of them here in province of the Ontario, like the people down at Cadbury Schweppes processing and bottling plant down in St. Catharines. They made grape juice.

I had occasion to tell you about this the other day, and I'm going to tell you about it again. There's 2,000 acres of juice grapes here in the province of Ontario, most of in Niagara. There are 105 families farming those 2,000 acres, some for as many as three and four generations. They produce juice grapes—not wine grapes, juice grapes. Cadbury Schweppes is shutting down the factory and 26 workers are losing their jobs forever, and 105 farm families are losing their livelihoods. And this government hasn't uttered one word that would indicate any hope for help or support for those farm families. I'll tell you what. Those farm families, those juice grape growers, they'd sure like to see some democratic reform here in the province of Ontario, but this legislation isn't going to give it to them, because the subsequent government is obligated, should the referendum indeed pass, to only introduce legislation and not even to keep it alive. First prorogation of the House, the bill dies; end of story. First day of second reading, the bill may well never be called again if there's full compliance. Even if it passes second reading, the bill can fly off into legislative orbit, into the

black hole. And where are the Liberals? Well, as I told you so many times before, the nice thing about being a Liberal is you don't always have to be a Liberal. You can be a Liberal one day, you can be a Conservative the next day. You can campaign like a New Democrat and govern like a Tory. You can cross the floor; you can flip-flop. Ms. Stronach can be a Tory one day, she can be a Liberal the next, and flee off to Magna heaven with no guilt, shame or remorse, because there's really no difference, is there? The nice thing about being a Liberal is you don't always have to be a Liberal.

So where do the Liberals stand on democratic reform? Where do the Liberals stand on proportional representation? Where do the Liberals stand on the proposal of the citizens' committee? Nowhere. You look, you look—you look under the sole of your foot. Check out the heel of your boot. From time to time you find something amusing or interesting there. You can't find it there. Where are the Liberals? They're nowhere. They're not behind the door, they're not in front of door, they're not above the door frame, they're not below the door frame. They're not on the top floor, they're not on the ground floor. They're not in the basement, they're not in the backyard, they're not in the front yard. The Liberals are nowhere. The Liberals just don't have any idea. The Liberals are pathetically playing games with the people of Ontario. The Liberals are using their majority at Queen's Park to be cute, far too cute, with people across this province. That's where the Liberals are. They come up with legislation that they say is meaningful, and I put to you: Is it? And then they won't even allow debate on that, will they? They won't even allow debate on that. They'll shut it down with a time allocation motion. They shut it down with a closure motion. They use the guillotine to end debate and somehow they suggest the minister puts to us that 11 hours on second reading is somehow more than adequate.

These are the same Liberals who have abandoned working families across Ontario. These are the same Liberals who have destroyed over 140,000 good, industrial, value-added manufacturing, wealth-creating jobs across the province of Ontario. These are same Liberals who send their Premier off to India to cut trade deals. What, we're going to send more of our call centre jobs to India? Is that what the trade deal is? We're going to send more of our jobs to India? Is that how Dalton McGuinty's plan is going to unfold? Because he certainly sure as hell doesn't have a plan for democratic renewal or democratic reform, does he? Are the Liberals going to campaign on support? Are the Liberals going to campaign on support for proportional representation? We don't know. They don't want to say. They want to be like the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. They're walking around and they're going to have big duct tape covering their mouths so that they can't say anything. They're going to be sitting on their hands. They're going to try to have it every which way but loose.

So why should anybody have any expectation level of the Liberals other than more fraud upon the people of

Ontario? Why should anybody expect anything other than that? Why should anybody expect anything other than more arrogance, more dismissal, more disdain and more "Oh, we feel your pain"? Remember that? How many speeches from how many Liberals and how many times by Dalton McGuinty? "We feel your pain. Oh, we feel your pain. Oh, you workers who have lost jobs, we feel your pain."

1930

Remember when the minister for infrastructure renewal—Mr. Ferreira, I don't think you were here yet. The casino in Niagara was laying off workers. Remember that? We split up and New Democrats asked them, "What are you going to do for these workers who are losing their jobs at the Niagara Casino?" The minister said, "We feel their pain. We're going to retrain them." And we said, "You doughhead, you already did. That's why they're working in the casino. They used to work in foundries, in steel mills, in pipe mills. Then you retrained them to work in the casino, but now they've lost their jobs in the casino."

Those farmers on the 2,000 acres of juice grape vineyards, what's the minister got in mind for them? Is he going to retrain them? For what?

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): The casino—

Mr. Kormos: There are no jobs in the casino, Mr. O'Toole. What the heck's the matter with you? They're laying people off in the casino. "We feel your pain," the whine goes, but is there any light at the end of the tunnel for these hard-working Ontarians? It gets cloudier, murkier and darker every day. I'm convinced that people in this province dearly want democratic reform. I'm convinced that most people dearly want to engage in the debate about proportional representation.

John Tory and the Conservatives have been making it increasingly clear that they are going to have a clear position when it comes to proportional representation. I understand that. I suspect New Democrats are going to disagree profoundly with the Conservatives, but I understand the Conservatives will come forward with a clear position that, should people agree, they will know who to vote for. And never having told anybody how to vote ever in my life—and I haven't—I have no qualms about saying that if people agree with the Conservatives, they should vote for the Conservatives. New Democrats are going to be very clear about where we stand when it comes to proportional representation and the need for fundamental democratic reform.

But what are the Liberals going to be telling folks? They're going to be saying, "Oh, it's up to you. I want to be neutral. I don't want to participate in this debate. It's your debate; it's your vote." Well, you have no qualms about imposing your interests, your will, your values, your views on people in so many other respects. All of a sudden you clam up. All of a sudden you crawl under the desk and are cowering. It's the "Duck, you suckers" syndrome.

Well, people expect their politicians to stand up and be counted. I expect Liberals to have been angry with their

government about bringing in time allocation, because but a precious handful of them ever got to participate in second reading or third reading debate on Bill 155, didn't they? Yet they have no qualms about taking the salary increase. They thought, "Oh boy, oh boy, just pass the cash. Just pass it along." So here you've got people who get paid more and more and they work less and less, whereas real people out there are working more and more and making less and less. I find it incredible that we have got a government here that cares so little that it's willing to pull the wool over people's eyes, or at least try to, over and over again, knowing full well that people are simply being duped by McGuinty and the Liberals and their gang of dupers.

Once again, I want to tell you that we had a collection of comments made by Liberals when they were opposing time allocation motions, when they were in opposition. There was one that was made by Mr. Caplan. I won't read that one. He has no credibility anymore, anyway. There was one made by Mr. Levac. I'll leave that one for Mr. Ferreira to read. There was one from Mr. Gerretsen condemning time allocation motions. I have one from John Gerretsen condemning time allocation motions. I have one from Mr. Sorbara condemning time allocation motions. I have one from Mrs. Dombrowsky condemning time allocation motions. I have one from Mrs. Dombrowsky again condemning time allocation motions. And I have one from James Bradley—Jim Bradley—long-time MPP for St. Catharines, condemning time allocation motions.

I should mention that New Democrats will be voting against this motion this evening—

Mr. Lalonde: I just got a message on my BlackBerry that says, "What is he talking about?"

The Acting Speaker: No, no. If you are referring to the use of a BlackBerry in this House, I would ask that the Sergeant at Arms seize it. Please take it.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: You cannot use BlackBerries in this House, and you cannot talk about using BlackBerries in this House. Please.

Mr. Kormos: I find that an interesting punctuation mark for my comments. Look, I want to come to the defence of the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde, using a BlackBerry. Please, don't be harsh on him. He's been away so long on junkets, he didn't know what the rules had become here in this chamber. Thank you kindly, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the members, please, to have some decorum in the House.

I recognize the member from Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to join the debate today, and I think that if there is ever an example of why of people may think electoral reform may be needed, I think we've just seen it.

There's an interesting bill before us and there's an interesting process before us. Last year I had the opportunity to serve with the minister who is bringing this for-

ward, the minister who is responsible for democratic renewal. I can remember the day those people were appointed. I remember the feeling that was in this province, that something different and something new was happening, that people are going to have a say in the running of their province. That was unusual. Now, I didn't know how unusual it was, but if you believe the press reports, this will be the first referendum held in province of Ontario since 1921. It seems to me that that is a historic occasion, a monumental occasion. It's something we should pay some attention to.

It was also interesting today to read some of the press reports. This may scare the pants off some politicians, and certainly seemed to scare the previous speaker, but when you read the press reports, you don't read about the members, you don't read about the ministers, you don't read about the Premier: You read about ordinary people, somebody like a retired computer specialist. Pat Miller predicted the new system would lead to "a more co-operative government" with "some continuity between elections..." A gentleman by the name of Chris Doody—I don't know what he does—says it might encourage more Ontarians to cast ballots. Visible minorities are noted here by a lady by the name of Melinda Selmys from Etobicoke Centre. Another gentleman, Edmund James from York North, decided that he was not going to vote for the system to go forward. There were people who said that they either agreed with the system moving forward or that they liked the status quo. But I believe that to say this is not an exciting time in Ontario's history is something that is just not true and I just don't think it's something that can be backed up.

1940

I think most of us try to get into educational institutions and talk to some of the students. I get in to see the grade 5s probably more than anybody else. I also talk to the grade 10s and grade 12s, but mainly students in our province in grade 5. I've come to realize from that that you're probably the best person you're ever going to be in your entire life in grade 5. That doesn't mean you can't get smarter, it doesn't mean you can't get more skilled, it doesn't mean a lot of things, but it means you're probably the best person you're ever going to be. That is, I think, that as you move ahead in your life, if you ever reach a hard decision and you're wondering, "What should I do? I'm kind of confused about this. I'm not sure if I should go this way or that way," think back to what you would have done in grade 5 and you'll probably get the right answer very quickly and it'll probably come to you in a very accurate form, because people at that age simply know right from wrong.

I like to engage those young people in a discussion on our political system. We start with the cynical view that's just been expressed as to why people shouldn't involve themselves in politics. We hear that every day in this House. It's a view that I don't think is shared by the young people of this province. I use the example of 1820. In 1820 the average person or the average commoner or the average peasant in Africa was equally as rich or poor

as the average common person in Europe or North America. Something has happened between 1820 and 2007. When you look at the North American economy and the European economy and the lifestyle we enjoy, and you look at what's happened in Africa, where we're still dealing with things like famines, massacres, HIV/AIDS epidemics, something has happened that has allowed us to move ahead as a society in a way that those people in other jurisdictions simply haven't been able to do, and yet we started from the same place.

When I have this discussion with the children, I tell them I think it's the way we've organized ourselves politically. I think it's the way we solve our disputes. I think it's the way we decide which way we're going to move forward as a society.

I believe that the current system we have in place has served us well. I was quite surprised, after doing some research, how few jurisdictions still use that system, however. I assumed, perhaps with my North American arrogance, that this system was in place all over the world. There are very few jurisdictions that still use the first past the post system. In fact, most jurisdictions in the world use a different system. That may surprise some people, it may upset some people, but it certainly puts in place the idea that perhaps we should be looking at other examples to see if we can't do better. Perhaps the status quo is the way to be, or perhaps we should be moving to a different type of system.

What people are asking is, can it be improved? What can't be denied—and it may have something to do with the quality of the debate in this House—is that people are turned off politics, young people especially. Is this exercise or process a part of drawing young people back into politics? Perhaps it's a part of it. I don't think anybody in this chamber would argue that it's all of it, but I think it's a good start.

What I don't think we should be doing, and what I think is being suggested by some of the speakers I've heard and some of the reports that I'm reading in the press, is that some people appear to have the temerity to suggest to voters in Ontario what they should do in a referendum, how they should vote in a referendum. Why would you have a referendum if you thought it was your God-given right to tell the electorate what they should do and how they should do it? The very idea behind a referendum is to allow people to have independent thought and to have a free say. That's why they happen so infrequently, because it's generally about very important issues, issues that could change the nature or the fabric of a society. So that's what we're being asked today to consider.

When you look at some of the descriptions in the press—"Cheers and applause rippled through a large meeting room in a government office ... when it was announced that the group of 102 citizens, who had been selected at random by the province and volunteered to study Ontario's voting procedure, approved the referendum," decided they wanted to move forward without any political interference, without listening to the New

Democrats, without listening to the Liberals, without listening to the Progressive Conservatives, decided they'd made up their mind that they had some advice they wanted to give to other people in Ontario that would allow this process to move forward. Somehow what I'm hearing is that there's something wrong with that, that some parties do not support that or some individuals do not support either that process happening or the fact that these people actually had the gall to come forward with an independent thought and say, "Why don't you look at this?" It's exactly what they were asked to do. They've delivered, I think, in spades. I think we should be encouraging them. I think we owe them our thanks. I think we should be proud of them. And I think in a non-partisan way in this House, we should be sending that thanks to them for the work they have done. Whether you agree with proportional representation, whether you agree with the status quo, whether you like the first past the post system, whatever your opinion is, we already owe those 102 citizens our gratitude for the work they have done.

To try to dismiss or to try to belittle their work, I think, is beneath the dignity of this House, and that's what I've been hearing so far. These people have given a lot of time. They've given up a lot of weekends. They knew this going in, and yet they delivered. They came to a conclusion on their own. They looked at models from all over the world. They looked at what other jurisdictions had done, how that reform had taken place, whether it was the sort of reform that had worked in the long run, and they came forward with what was their best effort by actually quite a substantial vote: 94 in favour, eight opposed. And yet I can imagine in that process that for those eight people who had a contrary view, their opinions were heard just as loudly as the 94 who voted in favour. That's a sign of a good and healthy system. It's one that I think we should be not only upholding and supporting in this House; it's one we should be looking for as an example to make some of the future decisions in this province. It's a model that I think we can refer back to when some of the larger decisions need to be made.

I'm going to step down now, but I'll tell you, this process has my full support. Whether I agree with the status quo or whether I agree with proportional representation I think is irrelevant. What is relevant is that in October 2007, people in Ontario, most people in Ontario for the first time in their lifetime, will have an opportunity to say how they should be governed, to take part in the process that has given us the freedoms, the lifestyle—whether you're a New Democrat or a Conservative or a Liberal or even a Green Party member, we know that we in Ontario have built a lifestyle that most people in the world would love to have. We know that we've got something to be proud of here. I think it's the approach we bring. Often it should be brought, and it's not brought, in a tripartite way in this House. But this should be an example of how it can be done.

I have no idea what the politics are of these people. They could be all Conservatives; they could be all Liberals; they could be all New Democrats. I suspect that

they are a blend of all of the above and perhaps parties that we haven't even heard of yet. But what can't be argued is that they've done their best for their province and brought forward some information that they've asked us to act upon. To try to hold that up or to try to besmirch that work, as I said, I think is below the dignity of this House. I think it's time to move forward on this. I think all members should be supporting the bill, at least at this stage. In the future, you'll have your say as an independent citizen. Each member of this House will have the opportunity on election day to go in and to mark a private ballot as to how you think we should move ahead on this question. But we should definitely be allowing this process to continue and respect the work that's been done by the citizens in this province.

1950

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I want to make it clear to the people of Ontario that this process is not a process of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's not set in a bipartisan or tripartisan atmosphere. This is a process that was set down by the Liberal Party of Ontario from start almost to finish, save and except for the select committee on parliamentary reform, which was only formed after complaining by the opposition. The select committee was not an initiative of the government of Ontario or the Liberal Party of Ontario as such.

Let's talk about the process as we've gone through it. The select committee did a tremendous amount of work. I know, Mr. Speaker, that you were involved in that work as a member of the select committee. The select committee was dominated by government members. But I will say to the government that most of the decisions of the committee were resolved in a unanimous way, so that the majority of the government was not used to move the select committee one way or the other in general. They voted against some of the amendments which I would have desired to put in, and I will refer to those later because I found it necessary for our party—Mr. Miller and I—to put forward a dissenting report.

I do not argue with the previous speaker from Oakville, who said that we should not denigrate the work of the members of the citizens' assembly. My only problem with the process is how those particular members were chosen. We keep hearing that they were chosen in a random way etc. That's not exactly true. There were 120,000 people selected from across Ontario and people were asked to write in about their interest in this particular matter. These people were not selected by the leaders of the various communities from across Ontario. I would have more comfort, quite frankly, going to various different people and trying to get a consensus on who should be sitting on the citizens' committee. I would have felt more comfortable with their recommendations had that process been that way.

My fairly long experience in this place tends to push me towards the idea that most people in Ontario view government from afar and not close in, and that most of these people perhaps were more involved in the process

than the average citizen. I don't know that totally, but I've read some articles on it etc. Notwithstanding that, these people went out and spent a lot of time—\$6 million worth—in order to put this particular recommendation in front of the Legislative Assembly or in front of the voters.

I guess the problem that I've had with the process is there was not even a debate in this Legislature about what was going to take place. There wasn't an opportunity for you or I or other members of the opposition to stand up and say, "We think you should maybe tweak this process this way or that way." It was a fiat from the government of Ontario, a fiat from the Liberal Party, that it was going to be done this way or that way. I guess the bottom line on the outcome of all of this—

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Remember your eight-and-a-half-year-old Fiat.

Mr. Sterling: I have a 15-year-old Taurus, but anyway, the outcome of all of this and Bill 155 is that at the ultimate end of the process, we're going to have a question that is not going to come in front of this Legislature to be approved or debated in this Legislature. We're going to have a question from the Liberal cabinet, the cabinet of Ontario, the Liberal Party of Ontario. I don't know what that question is going to include, but we all know that the wording of a question can have a tremendous impact on the results, on which way people vote. Do you include certain words which tend to make people think that this is forward-looking, or do you include other words which make people think that they're looking back?

So the whole process—I don't feel any ownership of this process. I don't feel any obligation to this process, because I am a member of the Legislature who has not had my fair say during the various stages of this process. I believe that I'm entitled, on behalf of the people of Lanark-Carleton, to have that say—I do have that say—particularly at the end, to have some input into what the final question is that will be put in front of the electorate of Ontario.

I also want to talk about the motivation for going through this process. When we were on the select committee, we found various motivations in various jurisdictions for going through a process of looking at how their elected representatives are in fact elected. In Germany, of course, the process was set up with a mixed member proportional system, which is somewhat similar to what the citizens' assembly has put forward. We found out that the primary purpose of that was to try to split power so that what happened from 1930 to 1945 would not reoccur in the historical context. So a lot of the impetus in terms of putting that forward, an MMP system, was driven not from inside but was driven from outside by the Allies, who insisted on a democratic process that would ensure that a despot like Hitler would not come to the fore again.

In Scotland, we found that an MMP system came not because of any wonderful motives by politicians that they

would have more women in their assembly or in their Parliament or that they wanted more people to vote or anything else. We found out that it was a pact between the Liberal government and the Labour government of Westminster to ensure that Scotland would never have a Conservative government. Even people whom we talked to who were "impartial" put forward exactly what the motives were for that change. So I guess I'm left a little in wonderment as to what the motivation for going through this whole process really was. I don't know what the motive was. I've never, never heard anybody come to me over the last 30 years that I've been elected and say, "Norm, we've got to elect our MPPs in a different manner."

Next, I would like to come back down to where we are today in the time allocation motion on Bill 155. It's more than ironic that, on a bill for democratic reform, the government cannot wait to pass this bill through the legislative process. It is really strange, given all I have said about the participation of the opposition in setting this up and the participation of the opposition in the Legislature in putting the final touches on it in terms of the question, that we have been denied that participation, that we have now moved to time allocation on Bill 155, the final legislative juggernaut in the process.

I don't want to say, "I told you so," but if we go back to the report of the select committee, which reported in November 2005, I think our dissenting opinion totally predicted what has come about. I want to put down and read into the record what that dissenting opinion was. Mr. Miller and I served on that particular select committee. I thought it was a good select committee. I thought Caroline Di Cocco was a good chairman of the committee. I think she did a good job, and I think all of the members worked very hard to come forward with consensus, as best they could. But as I said in my previous remarks, our caucus could not come to total consensus, and therefore we put forward a dissenting report.

2000

I want to read you a little bit of that report:

"We agree with the majority of the report—that is, electoral reform (as opposed to parliamentary reform) is unlikely to solve the problems facing our parliamentary system.

"In spite of this, we continue down a path which will be difficult if not impossible to reverse. We risk making a system badly in need of reform worse."

We are referring there to the fact that if an MMP system goes forward as proposed by the citizens' assembly, we are destined for minority Parliaments, coalition Parliaments and a new dawning of perhaps two, three, four or more political parties in this province.

My view, with my experience as a parliamentarian here, is that of the three parties that are presently represented in this Legislature, within their caucuses they have individuals who want to express extreme positions. When they express those extreme positions in front of their colleagues in caucus, they are sometimes moderated in their particular positions. So when they come to this

Legislature, they find a consensus within their own party normally, sometimes not; rarely, if ever, on the government side. Mostly it happens on the opposition side.

I believe that the public in general support that kind of system. They don't want radical, irrational behaviour by their Legislatures. They don't want Legislatures to say irrational, negative, racist kinds of things. I'm not saying that all of those kinds of things are said, but there is a moderating effect within our legislative system as it now exists, and I think that's important to maintain.

I think it's also important to note that when parties become government, they moderate their ideological positions, whether they be right, left or centre. It's hard to moderate a centre position, I guess, but they do moderate their positions on different areas. I think people, in general, in Ontario support the moderation of change. They want change, but they want thoughtful change and they want parties to think and talk about that from within, and I think that is best served by not having "coalition governments" where you can have a situation where a radical party with radical ideas can change the whole atmosphere of where a government may or may not be going. They can divert that ship that they drive down a canal in many different directions. I don't think the public necessarily support that. What they want is consistency of decision, and they want a government which is not changing all the time or changing their position.

I also would note that when you go to coalition governments or minority governments, it's harder for the public to call the governing party into accountability because, as we learned in Scotland, where there is a coalition government, the government of the day, which wins the most seats through the constituency system, first past the post, plus the MMP system, the mixed member proportional system, if you don't have a majority and you have to rely on support from other parties, you can easily say to the public: "Listen, we said we were going to do that, but we have to rely on these people over here in order to become the government. Therefore, we can fudge our political promise to you." Accountability becomes much more difficult; for the public to look at the political party and say, "You promised us this, and you didn't do this" or "You promised us this, and you did that." So I have difficulty with that particular part put forward.

I'll go on with the rest of the dissenting report: "With the present lack of trust by the public in their politicians, the temptation to seek change will be overwhelming. It will be difficult, if not impossible, for an objective assessment of the current system to be carried out due to the cynicism and distrust that has arisen towards politicians and the political process."

How would you ask 102 people to spend 38 weekends and not come forward with a change? If I was asked to suggest a change in our political system and I gave up 38 weekends, I would not be one of the eight who voted against this particular proposal.

I went over to the event where they had students come in and they picked 103 students from across our

province. I guess the minister hired this young fellow, who came up and he said, "You have the chance to change the history of Ontario." And by God, you know, if I was one of those people, that's what I'd believe. I would believe that here's my chance to make history. I'll be darned if I'll just congratulate the eight people who voted against—maybe they didn't vote for the status quo. It wasn't clear to me whether anybody voted for the status quo. So it's really difficult to see how a group elected to change—as I understand, in the first meeting, the chairman of this venture said—a system that's broken—that was sort of the lead-in to this whole process. So I say, God bless these people who've spent their time doing this. I don't blame them for coming forward with another solution because I wouldn't spend 38 weekends and not come forward with some kind of solution.

"We believe it would be a mistake to assume that cynicism and distrust have as their principal cause a concern by the population about how their elected representatives are elected. We believe the cynicism and distrust have a lot more to do with what elected representatives actually do once elected and to some extent how well or how poorly the institution to which they are elected to actually functions, as opposed to the method of election."

What we do as individual legislators here on the government side or opposition side has one big effect; the other part is how this institution functions, and I think this institution doesn't function very well. It don't think it functions as well as when Mr. Bradley and I came here 30 years ago. I think, for whatever reasons—political reasons, time, etc.—the institution is just not as good as it was. We have to look at that, and I think that we should do that, quite frankly, before we make a major change in how our politicians are elected.

"Consequently, we believe that, prior to examining the method by which we elect our members of provincial Parliament, we should show the leadership necessary to reform the Legislative Assembly itself and its functioning in the public interest." Number one, I don't think we need some reforms; all we need is the political will by our political leaders to use the tools that are there to make this place run better.

The select committee on electoral reform was extremely interesting for you and I, Mr. Speaker, and for the other members of the committee. It was a great process where we learned a great deal: what had been done in other jurisdictions, what had been done in British Columbia, what had been done where the experts were, where the interest groups were, and all that kind of thing. For the life of me, I don't understand why governments—and this is not just the present government; it was true of our government, and I'm going back almost 20 years now—have not used select committees so that individual members can participate in a meaningful and constructive way towards government policy and legislation.

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When Jim Bradley, the member for St. Catharines, and I were first elected here in 1977, there were four or five

different select committees that sat, year after year, and the membership would not change from one Parliament to the other—maybe minor adjustments, but, generally speaking, would not change. There were people who may have been interested in education; there was a select committee on education. There were select committees dealing with rural affairs, etc. The beauty of that was that there was less animosity across the floor because you got to know members very, very well, on the government side, on the opposition side, etc., and a lot of knowledge was gained as you went through the process. I believe that those select committees had a real impact on the legislative and policy decisions of the government of the day.

You could have more select committees. When I was the government House leader in 1997, I brought forward a change to the standing orders to allow the government to refer bills out after first reading. I think that just about every piece of legislation should go that way, or at least half of them—the ones that are not related to confidence matters. I can understand perhaps a budget bill not going that way, but a lot of legislation could go that way.

The beauty of a bill going out after first reading is that people and the government are not entrenched into their position. Members learn about the subject matter of the bill before they have to put their vote up, and the government can listen to people coming to public hearings after first reading and say, “Hey, that group really has a cause.” When the legislators are sitting around the table at first reading and listening to these people—they’ve really caught on to the legislators, and, “Maybe we should make an accommodation for their point of view.” If you’re there after second reading, the government unfortunately feels that it’s their show. It’s very, very difficult to make any argument that there’s going to be substantive change, and they feel trapped. They’re sort of in a corner where they can’t move without a great deal of embarrassment that they may have made a mistake in terms of the consultation that took place before that happened.

The third matter which I think would really generate tremendous freedom and extension of a private member’s role would be a much greater role for you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the Speaker should have much greater power in this legislative chamber and outside of this legislative chamber to act as an honest broker between various members and various different parties.

We learned when we were in Scotland that the reason they had more women in the Legislature is not necessarily anything to do with MMP. It has something to do with the Labour Party in terms of nominating more women candidates, but do you know what it has more to do with? It’s that when women come to sit in the Scottish National Parliament, they know that they’re going to be out of there at 6 o’clock. They have daycare in the Scottish National Parliament. There’s a schedule that’s set up in the first part of the week, controlled by the Speaker—not the government House leader; the Speaker is the primary person who sits as the Chair at the House leaders’

meetings each week—and he sets a reasonable schedule so that all members of the Legislature, their points of view and their arguments for more or less debate are taken into consideration.

When you get somebody like Lisa MacLeod or Ms. Mossop—

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Or Laurel Broten.

Mr. Sterling:—or Laurel Broten or whomever, if we want young women or men who have child responsibilities to come to this place—and we want them because we need their points of view, as well as a few of us with a few grey hairs—we have to accommodate them, and I think we can; I think we can do it easily. This place would be much more civil. It would be a better place to work. We should sit in the morning. Why sit at night? Let’s sit in the mornings. Who cares whether the cabinet is on? Other members of the government can come and fill in the benches in terms of dealing with legislation during that period of time on Wednesday morning if they have to have a cabinet meeting. We can adjust our schedule, anyway, to that.

I think there’s a lot of good ideas that we can put into place if our political leaders—the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party—decide that they’re going to play the game, they’re going to be involved in trying to make this place, in some cases, a more consensus-based decision-making body than a place where we are butting each other’s heads all the time. At any rate, our point here is that we should consider those kinds of institutional changes here before we set out on a brand new path to elect our members by some other way or manner.

Our last point in terms of this was that we also believe that this referendum bill, Bill 155, lacks one very significant clause, and that is to allow the people of Ontario to have the opportunity sometime down the road to decide—if there’s a change—whether they want to keep the system or change the system.

I met recently with some politicians from a province in South Africa called Gauteng. All their members are elected under a proportional system. They were telling me about the stranglehold that their party has on them. They cannot move. They cannot speak out. You want to talk about our members having to toe the party line? These guys and women, if they speak out against the party, they ain’t on the list the next time around. The party is in total control of the whole process. And every one of these provincial politicians from South Africa told me that they would love to have a first past the post system; they would love to have the direct accountability with their members.

So I really do feel that there is an absolute necessity to provide the population an opportunity go backwards. Because I’ll tell you this: If you go one way, the parties ain’t going to let you to come back to the other. They will not let you come back to the other. They will love the control they have. They will never let this system come back.

We have another speaker. I did not think I was going to go on as long as I did, but I want to thank all of the members of the select committee who sat with you and me, Mr. Speaker, for their participation in this, and I really do believe that we're putting the cart before the horse in this situation.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): I want to thank the member for Lanark-Carleton for his insightful comments. I know he is one of the two longest-serving members in this place. He certainly has a lot of knowledge and experience to relate, so I want to thank him.

I also realize that I have a very tough act to follow in the member from Niagara Centre, who entertained and amused us for the better part of 25 minutes. But I'm glad he's left me with some time to make what I hope is a compelling presentation on Bill 155, the Electoral System Referendum Act. I will be splitting my time into two sections, if you will, the first to be spent talking about this motion of time allocation and the second on the bill itself.

I think that my leader and certainly my colleagues, through the press over the past several days and weeks, have made it quite clear that New Democrats are in favour of real electoral reform. However, we cannot support this sham, this charade that's being foisted upon the unsuspecting people of Ontario. Why do I describe it in that way? First of all, it seems ironic to me that on a bill talking about democratic reform, about altering, perhaps modernizing, our system of selecting representatives to come to this place, this government decides to invoke a limitation on the amount of time we have to debate this important motion.

I haven't been here for very long, but I recall that there were members on the government side who, when they were on the opposition side, whimpered against the government of the day. I remember the Minister of Health, who at one time considered healthy debate to be screaming at private citizens across Gerrard Street.

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Hon. Mr. Smitherman: And I remember you when you lived downtown.

Mr. Ferreira: I remember that too, Minister.

But we have members of the government side who, when they were here on this side, stood up and railed against the undemocratic measures of the government of the day. And what have I witnessed here, just sitting in this House in three and a half short weeks? I've witnessed this government try and ram through omnibus legislation which they formerly, when they were in opposition, spoke out, lashed out, against. And now, tonight, we see this government invoking time allocation on this bill; again, a practice they thought unseemly and anti-democratic when they were on the opposition side.

I call this the government's greatest hits when it comes to speaking out against time allocation. I'm going to read some of these, because it shows that this government acts quite differently when it is in charge here. The first one: Mr. Bradley, the government House leader, is one of the other longest-serving members of this House. I

know he is a member who has a great deal of respect for the traditions, protocols and procedures of this place. But he, in opposition, spoke out several times against time allocation. I want to read a few of those selectively.

Back in December 2001, Mr. Bradley said, "How I wish we didn't have to debate this time allocation motion.... I simply want to say that once again we see the government using its iron fist on the opposition." "Iron fist" is how Mr. Bradley, today the government House leader, referred to that government. I say his government tonight is pounding with an iron fist. Mr. Bradley, again, these are the greatest hits.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity, unfortunately, to speak on yet another time allocation motion. That is a motion, of course, where debate is choked off in the Legislative Assembly by the dictum of the government; that's most unfortunate, but it does happen only too often," said Mr. Bradley.

He is a member I respect, but here is another one from him on time allocation: "I always deplore the fact that I have to speak on a time allocation motion. I would prefer to be talking about several important issues that could come before the House."

When I was elected to come to this place, I thought that's what I would be doing, that I would be given an opportunity to debate the issues and the bills that come before this House, that my colleagues would all be given equal opportunity to speak, to rise on the bills that come before this House. As my friend from Niagara Centre pointed out during his presentation on this particular bill, only two members before this day, including you, Mr. Speaker, and our leader had had a chance to comment on this bill on behalf of their constituents.

I have some other greatest time allocation hits from the present members of the cabinet, from Mrs. Dombrowsky, the Minister of Agriculture—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: If you wish to speak—please have a seat, or I'm going to have to grow taller, because I cannot see him with you standing there. Please continue.

Mr. Ferreira: I think we should put that chair on a riser, Mr. Speaker, to give you a clear sightline.

I want to quote Mrs. Dombrowsky, the Minister of Agriculture, on some time allocation quotes that she was gracious enough to supply. She said, "I have to say that it is with regret that I have to stand in my place again today to speak to yet another time allocation motion. I think the point I would like to stress in this debate is that this is probably one of the most significant issues that this House will consider in terms of business on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario. The bill was introduced a little more than a week ago and already the government has moved to close debate on this most significant issue."

Mrs. Dombrowsky's comments could be taken for comments on this particular bill and what this government is trying to do with this particular bill.

Later on, she says, "Here we go again. Sadly, again, we're here debating a time allocation motion. We're here

talking about all the reasons why we would like to see this bill get full debate in the Legislative Assembly."

I could quote Mrs. Dombrowsky further. She certainly has given us plenty of material to work with. But she's joined by some of her colleagues. Mr. Sorbara, the finance minister, said in this House, on the opposition side, when he was sitting over here next to the now-Minister of Health, "I stand here today to condemn this time allocation motion "and to say to you that—let me put it this way—governments are defeated for two reasons: one, because of what they do, because of the policies they bring forward and the things they do to the people of a place like Ontario, and the second reason they are defeated is the way in which they go about doing them.... This time allocation motion is just another example of why people are so anxious to get to the ballot box in a general election and send them packing."

Perhaps the Minister of Finance is looking ahead to what will happen six months from now, and that's advice that he's giving to the people of Ontario, to send this government packing on October 10.

But there's more. There's more on the greatest time allocation hits of this Liberal government. My friend across the way—the members will know that I'm the housing critic here and I've had a chance to ask on a couple of occasions some questions of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He joins the hit parade here and he says, "It is shutting off debate. We've got many, many members on this side of the House who want the opportunity to speak on this bill, and that's being denied...."

He says further on, "Closure is not the way a democratically elected Parliament should operate." If there's one time that I agree with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, it is on that quote.

Mr. Gerretsen goes on and says, "We are losing our parliamentary democracy in this province and it doesn't do any of us any good. It puts politicians in disrespect as far as the general public is concerned.

"I would urge this government: see the error of your ways. Do not use time allocation again; enter into a discussion with the House leaders so that we can come up with a meaningful legislative program so that bills can be debated for the length of time that is required in each and every case."

Is his government today listening? Well, based on what we are debating here tonight, they are not listening. They are ignoring the words of Mr. Gerretsen.

I've got just two more to go through.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: And then you'll have some content?

Mr. Ferreira: I'll get to comment, all right.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Content.

Mr. Ferreira: I'll get to the content. But this is quite revealing content, because it speaks to the duplicity of this government.

Mr. Levac: "First, in a nutshell, time allocation itself, the reality of what time allocation means: basically the

stopping of debate ... a new device with which this government has been stifling democracy."

This government today is stifling democracy.

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I've saved the best for the last, and I won't be referring to page 68 of an Ombudsman's report; instead I'll be referring to a quote from Mr. Caplan himself. He says, "I usually start off my remarks by saying it's a pleasure to speak to something on behalf of the people of Don Valley East, but it really isn't. This is yet another closure motion, a gag order on the Legislature. How could it ever be a pleasure to speak to that, when that's the normal course of action and when this Legislature is shut down for the very purpose it was meant for, which was to discuss important matters?" That was—I lost count, there were so many of them—six or seven members of the cabinet of this government railing against the very tactics their own government is utilizing to muzzle, to stifle, to cut off, to shut down debate in this House on a very important piece of legislation.

I mentioned that the second half of my presentation would speak to the bill itself.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: All right.

Mr. Ferreira: I'm glad I've got a fan over there in the Minister of Health; I'm that glad I do.

I want to congratulate the members of the citizens' assembly, who have put in a great deal of time and effort to put forward an impressive recommendation to the people of Ontario. The people of Ontario will get a chance to pass judgment on that on the same day that they vote for their new government in this place. They have come forward with an MMP proposal that is used extensively in other jurisdictions. It certainly is a serious proposal that is worthy of strong consideration, and New Democrats will be campaigning Yes to electoral reform and to the initiative being brought forward. But it's obvious that this government is not serious in their intent to have reform take place.

Why do I say that? Well, they have imposed a super-majority requirement. We must have 60% of all the valid referendum ballots cast in favour of this recommendation in more than 60% of the ridings, which means at least 64 electoral districts in the reconfigured House we will have after October 10. That's not a sign of a government that's serious about electoral reform, serious about changing the manner in which members are elected to this House. Why is it that they may not be serious? Well, take a look: They have been tremendous beneficiaries of the present system. In the last election they only received 46% of all the valid ballots cast, yet they have more than 70% of the seats in this House.

Now, I will agree that over the course of the past couple of decades, all parties have benefited from the flaws in the present system. And yes, in 1990, our party received 38% of the votes and was able to win 55% of the seats. That pattern was repeated in 1995 with the present official opposition and again in 1999, when they received well less than 50% of all ballots cast in the province but, in the present flawed system, received well

over 50% of the seats. The difference is that my party, the New Democrats, is serious about seeing reform through. We have said quite clearly that the threshold should be 50% plus one. That should determine whether or not we reform the system. In fact, the select committee on electoral reform, in its report from November 2005, set the threshold at exactly that: 50% plus one. This committee, it's interesting to note and to point out, was comprised of a majority of members of the government side—how quickly they changed their minds. That committee unanimously recommended 50% plus one as a threshold for democratic reform.

In case they need to be reminded, let me point out the members of the government who unanimously supported that. There was the member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge; there was the member for Sarnia–Lambton, who is now the Minister of Culture; there was the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale; there was the member for Ottawa Centre; there was the member for Nipissing; and lastly, now Minister of Education, the member for Don Valley West. All said unanimously that the threshold should be 50% plus one. When I referred earlier to a sham and a charade by setting the bar at 60%, that's what this process becomes. It means that this government isn't serious.

Interestingly enough, they haven't talked about the amount of money they're willing to put forward to help educate the people of Ontario about the choices before them in this referendum. The head of Fair Vote Canada, which has done excellent work on electoral reform, suggested a figure of \$13 million in the newspapers this weekend, and I'm wondering if the government will take heed and invest that kind of money to ensure that we have a fair process and that these calls for democratic reform are given an opportunity to succeed.

I see that my time is quickly diminishing—

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: That's right. October 10 will be the end of it.

Mr. Ferreira: I'd like to suggest to the Minister of Health that I'll be here for a whole lot longer than that. In fact, I think that he may be the one who serves here for not too much longer. But that could be a for a host of reasons.

My party has made a number of meaningful, thoughtful proposals for real democratic reform and renewal in this province, and I'd like to share these with all the members. Perhaps the government will see fit to borrow some of the ideas, because they are good ideas.

First of all, on the issue of political finance in this province, we've been quite clear: There ought to be a ban on corporate and labour donations. Let's level the playing field. In fact, it is working quite well federally. This isn't new; we've called for this in prior campaigns. In fact, this model exists quite successfully in other provincial jurisdictions across Canada—in Quebec and Manitoba, to be precise—and I would argue that it is working quite successfully at the federal level, where we've been able to take that element of big money, of corporate money, out of the political process. Perhaps the members on the

government side feel hindered by this because they have to work a little bit harder to connect with the grassroots, with regular folk across this province, to encourage them to make smaller donations to support their campaigns, and that's perhaps why I hear the cries of protest from the members on the government side.

We also believe that we need to bring back enumeration in this province. I can't tell you how many thousands of electors in my riding have been disfranchised because those Elections Ontario staffers no longer come knocking on doors to ensure that you are on the election list. We've seen this problem of folks being left off the list escalate. There's an estimate out there that as many as 1.5 million Canadians have been left off the list on the federal level—Canadians who should have been on the election list. That's another reform we would like to see.

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We'd like to see true proportional representation in this province, to adequately reflect the wishes of Ontarians to ensure that the Legislature is reflective of their voting intentions and that not a single vote that is cast in a general election is wasted. That would be true, meaningful reform that would have long-lasting impact on the province of Ontario and the composition of successive Parliaments in this place. But what we're seeing from this government is far from that. We're seeing a half-hearted attempt that, at the end of the day, I'm afraid will not succeed in bringing much-needed reform to this place.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I want to begin by talking about somebody who is probably similar to a lot of the individuals who gave seven months of their time to be on the citizens' assembly. Her name is Donna Tichonchuk. I've known Donna for a very long time, but when Donna told me she had the appointment, my biggest fear was that I have a heck of a time pronouncing her last name. It's Donna Tichonchuk. I've never been able to say it all that well, but she is an incredible individual. I think that, probably like a number of the individuals on this citizens' assembly, she has undergone an incredible experience.

I'm going to tell you a little bit about Donna because, like I said, I think she's similar to a lot of the people who had the opportunity to participate in what I think was just an absolutely fantastic process. Donna is from the North Bendale community. She was very involved in the community for many years: in community garage sales, in the community association, in our Jingle Bell Ball that we do every year, in the North Bendale Softball Association. Her husband, Michael, was involved in all those activities as well. They have a couple of kids—really good kids; they're doing well in school. They're a terrific family that contributes a great deal to our community.

But Donna is not at all an expert on politics and political associations and different levels of government and international politics. When she went into this, she went into it just as a regular citizen who has had an interest in politics but certainly had not taken courses in it and certainly had not participated directly in politics, which I

think makes her the perfect kind of person to have a look at the potential changes this citizens' assembly had to consider.

It wasn't long ago that I had an opportunity to sit down with Donna—I asked her to come into the office. I just wanted to see how she was doing, how she was enjoying her duties, where they were at and how she thought it was going overall. I could not believe the enthusiasm that Donna exuded that day, the passion she had for where they were going. I had a feeling that they were going to come out with something new, just by the passion that she talked to me with during our time together. Donna felt that this was the best experience she had had in her entire life. She said that the people she met across the province were absolutely wonderful, dedicated people. She felt that this was something she would never give up for anything in the world.

I would like, on behalf of all of us here, to thank Donna for the work she has put into this citizens' assembly, and I'd like to thank all the over 102 residents across the province who have contributed to what I think was a very healthy and productive process.

I'd also like to thank George Thomson. I had an opportunity to speak with him as well when I attended one of the assembly sessions. He has really dedicated himself to this project. Everything he has ever been involved in has always turned out to be very successful in terms of the work he has done and the advice he has given. I think the leadership he has shown on this has been absolutely stellar and is going to serve us very well heading into the future.

A few minutes ago, I had an opportunity to go out to the members' lobby and there was a TV show on, *The Agenda*, with Steve Paikin. They were discussing this very issue, and the debate was absolutely fascinating, as they were going back and forth talking about the pros and cons of the systems and that the public is soon going to be engaged in this debate. Just listening to that debate and thinking that our public are going to have an opportunity to engage themselves in a process where they will be able to choose for themselves how they want to be governed was exciting to me. I think that is a terrific process.

I think of the alternatives and imagine if we didn't go the referendum route. Imagine if we said, "Okay, let's just do it the way we do most legislation." The way we do most legislation is appropriate. We come to the House, debate it, go to committee, hear from the public—there's usually a fair amount of room for consultation. We often amend the legislation at committee and bring it back here for final reading. The process works pretty well for most legislation. But on something as important as this, I think it really behooves us to go to the public directly and see how they feel about it, because I think that if we were to go the other route there's no question that all of us here would probably get into partisanship on it eventually. When we talk in terms of the electoral process, each party would probably look at, "What's best for us, in terms of our own re-election chances?" I think

those are the kinds of things that would start coming into our psyche when we're debating it, and I don't think it would be a healthy and fulsome debate. I think it's better to let this go to the public. Let them have a look at it.

I hope that all parties in this House recognize that while it's important to get the information out there, and there's probably nothing wrong with parties taking a position one way or another, and probably nothing wrong with members taking a position one way or another if they choose to—some may choose to remain neutral; we'll probably all decide in our own way how we want to handle it going into the next election. But I hope that the public is not subjected to any kind of propaganda campaign on this. I hope the information they get is information that allows them to make a decision based on what they think is in the public interest, and not be subjected to political campaigns based on narrow political interests. I would hope the political parties get the message in terms of ensuring that, yes, bring the message forward on what you think is best; that's fine. If you want, take a position as a party, take positions as individuals, but let the public decide on something like this. I think it's very important that we allow the public to have their say. I think it really speaks well of a government, of the confidence of a government, of the confidence we have in the people.

I'm confident in the people of Scarborough Centre. I'm confident that they will know what's best for them if given the information they need to decide. I'm confident in the people of Ontario. I'm confident that they will do their due diligence, that they will consider this very important matter, an issue that could be very historic in terms of the decision they decide to make. I think they will make the right decision.

I want to touch just for a second, because I don't have too much time left, on the 60% threshold. This is a very important decision that we'll be putting to the public, and I think it requires a consensus. It requires more than 50% plus one. I think it's extremely important that there's a consensus. I would hate to come in with a fairly significant change to our electoral process and have 49% of the people out there not supporting it. I think it would likely deem that process subject to failure. I think a 60% threshold is reasonable. If this is a positive change, if the people of our province are properly educated going into this referendum to make an educated decision—and I expect that we'll ensure they are—I don't see any reason why a 60% threshold wouldn't be quite possible to achieve if the system being advocated is the best system to pursue.

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I'm looking forward to this referendum. I think it will be historic. I think it will be exciting for each and every one of us to be part of it. I think it will be exciting to allow the people of Ontario to have their say. I certainly think it's something that's going to reinvigorate interest in politics in Ontario. I think this referendum is likely going to see an increase in participation at the polls across this province, which is a good thing. I think you're

going to see young people involving themselves in the political process as a result of this. I know this for a fact, Mr. Speaker, because you and I will be at a school in Scarborough later this week, talking to young people about a number of interests in a political forum. One of the issues they'll be talking about will be democratic renewal. Certainly we'll look forward to hearing what they have to say on this, and I think they're going to be very enthused about engaging in a debate that's going to have potential to historically change the electoral process in this province.

I'm looking forward to moving forward with this legislation; I'm looking forward to moving forward with this referendum next October. I think it bodes very well, whichever way it turns out, for the political process in Ontario. I would like once again to thank Donna and all the members of the citizens' assembly for the incredible work they've done on behalf of this province and on our behalf.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): As has been noted by several of the other speakers this evening, including my colleague the member from Lanark–Carleton, how ironic it is that we're dealing with a time allocation motion on a bill that deals with electoral reform, democratic renewal and restoring the public's faith in the political process. But I should say that this is something that, in my short time in the Legislature, I've seen happen several times. There seems to be a pattern emerging that every time the going gets tough—things aren't quite working out the way they want—the government just invokes closure, shuts the door and shuts off any further debate.

I've just passed my first anniversary here in this Legislature, and already I've seen the government invoke closure on what I would consider to be three fundamental bills. The first was in December 2006: Bill 107, with respect to the human rights reform legislation, which dealt with human rights issues, matters of great importance to vulnerable Ontarians. What happened? The debate was summarily cut off. Secondly, we've seen it in the budget bill, debate which involves \$23 billion of additional spending, year over year. It's going to basically go under the radar without the benefit of a great degree of public scrutiny. Finally, here we are with the bill on electoral reform, dealing with this motion to time allocate this bill.

Before I get into substantive discussion with respect to this, I would like to go back to some of the comments that have been made by some of the government members over the years with respect to this issue. In 2001, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said the following about closure: "I know there are some people who will say, 'You know, nobody really cares. Nobody cares any more about closure. At one time this was a big thing, where democracy in effect was shut down by a government, but nobody cares any more.'"

"If that's so, and it may very well be, it's a sad state of our democracy in this province if people really don't care about that."

I'd say it's a very sad state of our government that on one hand claims that the very aim of this legislation is to restore public faith in the system and on the other uses time allocation on the bill, a measure that one of the Premier's ministers is on record as saying is a factor that is perhaps responsible for disenchanting voters in the first place. He is also on record as characterizing closure as "cutting off the parliamentary debate that we believe in with our democratic system." I'd really like to know how the government would reconcile this disparity, given the motion they have filed.

Notwithstanding this irony, I say to government members that there are ways to start restoring public faith in the political system immediately—not in a month, not after October 10, not after the next government introduces legislation to implement a new electoral system, if that is what is chosen, but today. The very fact of the matter is that people care more about how politicians act once they are elected than how they are elected. Thus, I believe that effecting parliamentary change would be more beneficial than instigating electoral reform as we try to restore public faith in the political system.

One of the ways we can do this is through strong leadership. Almost four years ago, the people of Ontario elected Dalton McGuinty with a majority mandate, a result that comes with immense responsibility. However, since his election, he has done nothing but erode the confidence of the public in their government by displaying weak leadership. He has broken his promises, broken his faith with the people of Ontario and completely abdicated his responsibility to remain accountable to voters.

Just this afternoon, we gave the Premier and his ministers an opportunity to show that he is really committed to real and tangible openness and accountability in politics by tabling an opposition motion to refer the issue of the OLG scandal to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. That way, we could finally start getting to the truth about the OLG issue and what the government knew about this before the matter was unearthed by the Ombudsman's office. Instead of voting to support this motion, to support a practice that has legislative precedents, would cost very little and would give the Premier an opportunity to honour his election commitments to the people of Ontario, this Premier and his government cavalierly voted to defeat it in an attempt to continue their apparent cover-up of this egregious scandal. This is quite something, coming from a Premier who made repeated demands for legislative committees of the Assembly while in opposition.

In 1991, the Premier said, "Our public and our traditions of fairness demand that this matter be reviewed by a committee of this House. The course that the government members of the committee have embarked the committee upon means that this government has no intention of dealing with this matter publicly and fairly. Government members have accused us of being on a witch hunt. We are on a hunt—a hunt for the facts, and we will pursue those facts relentlessly, rigorously and unfailingly."

Given his overwhelming record as an active pursuer of legislative inquiries, you might think the Premier would have seized the opportunity with which he was presented this afternoon. Instead, for some mysterious reason, he has completely reversed his position on this issue with no substantive explanation. As I noted earlier, supporting our motion would also have given the Premier an opportunity to consider some of the election promises he made back in 2003. He has broken promises since then, such as not to raise taxes, to close coal-fired electricity plants by 2007, and on and on—over 50 promises that have been broken. Now it seems we can add another broken promise to the Premier's resumé.

Despite all the initiatives to start restoring public trust immediately that we have urged the government to consider, we are left here tonight debating a motion to invoke closure on Bill 155. Not only am I wary of the very principle of cutting off debate on a bill concerning electoral reform, as I've noted; I have to say that my apprehension is only increased upon examination of the full content of this legislation, which is something I would like to comment on in further detail but unfortunately time is not going to allow.

In closing, I would say, small wonder that this government is losing the trust of the people in the political process—we have no clear plan detailing what will happen should this bill be proclaimed. In fact, as I stated in the outset, there's a pattern emerging here, and it's most regrettable for all of us who believe in the democratic process.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): As parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for democratic renewal, I'm delighted to join my colleagues again in speaking today in support of Bill 155, the Electoral System Referendum Act, 2007. Let me start by saying that this bill will enable every Ontarian's voice to be heard regarding the province's electoral system.

We know the decision of the independent Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, now that they've completed their deliberations. We know they have recommended that Ontario adopt a new electoral system. We know that the members of the citizens' assembly voted 94 to 8 in favour of recommending replacement of our current first past the post system with mixed member proportional representation, which means the question will go to a referendum in which a 60% majority will be required to pass the change.

This new system will also result in an increase in the number of MPPs from 107 to 129. As the minister reminded us earlier today, the citizens' assembly members have been spending two weekends a month since September studying our current electoral system and others. They also led public consultations in communities across this province. As well, these 52 women and 51 men were given the opportunity to consult with former members of the select committee on electoral reform.

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I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of those members of the citizens' assembly on electoral reform.

I'd also like to make a personal thank you to my citizens' assembly member from the riding of Brampton Centre. Her name is Joyce Hughes. I understand she's an avid traveller. She was really excited to participate in the assembly and to discuss and review electoral systems and she was excited about contributing to some possible change. As well, I'd like to acknowledge the hard work of former judge and chair of the committee, George Thomson.

I think everybody in this Legislature is looking forward to receiving the final report, which apparently is going to be available to us on May 15. It will include the details and the rationale for the citizens' assembly. I think we heard earlier that there was a show tonight on TVO, and it was really interesting to listen to the citizen member who was on the panel tonight talk about her rationale for her decision, and I think each member of the committee would have a different reason for the decision they made. I'm looking forward to seeing that report.

May 15 is an important date. It's at that time we'll have an opportunity to learn about the details of those recommendations, and after reviewing the final report, we're going to announce the next step in this process: public education. That's why we're here tonight, because we've given the people of Ontario the power to shape the future of the electoral system. Our government trusts the people of Ontario to make this important decision.

In order to respond to the citizens' assembly recommendation, we have to put processes in place in time for the next provincial election, which is when this referendum question will be placed before Ontarians. That's why we're time-allocating this bill this evening. We are working toward the next steps in this democratic renewal agenda. Our government has done much to bring democracy into the 21st century and we're continuing to work on delivering results.

This bill promotes our belief in democracy, where each citizen has the opportunity to participate in building a better society, and their government takes pride in empowering those citizens we serve. Now that the citizens' assembly has recommended a new electoral system, we will ensure that Ontarians have access to fair and neutral information that they need to make an informed decision on the referendum in October.

If in the referendum Ontarians vote to change the electoral system, the government would be bound by the results to introduce the alternative system. This proposed legislation would require the government to introduce a bill by December 31, 2008. This bill would support implementing the recommendation of the citizens' assembly. It's up to Ontarians to decide which electoral system best reflects their values. It's the government's responsibility to guarantee that their voices are heard loud and clear. This bill promotes our belief in democracy, where each citizen has an opportunity to participate in building a better Ontario, and our government takes pride in offering the process that will allow that to occur.

I had the opportunity to sit on the committee that heard from numerous Ontarians and groups on this piece

of legislation. It was rewarding and heartening to see so many individuals who were captured by this bill. They were enthusiastic, they were passionate, they were either for or against it and they had different recommendations. I recall the day we sat at that hearing that there was a snowstorm, and despite the snowstorm, people came out and were still passionate about what they heard. They didn't say, "I'm too busy," or "It's too dangerous; I can't get there." They still made a point of getting here. So, clearly, people care about this issue. I'm very grateful for their participation.

We heard a variety of recommendations and concerns expressed on the issue of the threshold. We heard arguments for a simple majority and those in support of our recommended decision rule. What we must remember is that the adoption of a new electoral system represents a foundational change in Ontario's democracy. We believe that a decision of this magnitude deserves to have the support of a solid majority of Ontarians across this province. This proposed legislation reflects the significance of this decision. We're requiring a solid majority amongst the Ontario electorate of our province. We believe that the people of Ontario deserve that level of certainty.

There's something to be said about the fundamentals behind such an important piece of legislation. It's important to understand how a referendum vote would be administered, and I'd be happy to explain some of those details. This legislation is rooted in the existing election process. The referendum will be administered by Elections Ontario in a way that maintains both the integrity of the election and of the referendum. The powers of the candidates and their scrutineers would not change, and they'd retain the right to challenge electors and oversee the vote and the vote counting process.

If passed, this bill will build on our existing election process and allow the referendum to take place with the same safeguards and protections. We recognize the need to make sure that Ontarians have confidence in the election process. We understand the importance of transparency with respect to the rules that will govern a potential referendum campaign. This bill entrenches the importance of safeguarding the integrity of the referendum process and the electoral process.

This proposed legislation would also allow the government to create and Elections Ontario to enforce rules regarding referendum campaign finances. There may be spending and contribution limits set similar to those that govern parties and candidates. The structure we've proposed for referendum campaign finance rules is similar to the Election Finances Act. It would include spending and contribution limits, advertising rules, reporting and record-keeping requirements similar to those governing parties and candidates. The regulations would impose registration requirements on those wishing to campaign in the referendum and, overall, enhance the transparency and fairness of the process. This is all in an effort to ensure that a referendum campaign is carried out in a manner that Ontarians will be equipped with the information

necessary to make informed opinions in an election. These rules would enable a province-wide referendum conversation and establish an inclusive process that's good for democracy.

I really look forward to reading the citizens' assembly report, which is due on the 15th. It's going to provide us with some decisions and rationale and help us move forward with that process.

Interestingly enough, the Ontario students' assembly, which was composed of young Ontarians from age 14 to 18, also recommended a new electoral system. They recommended that the province adopt a new MMP system similar to what we've heard is available in New Zealand and Germany. The students' assembly was reportedly attracted to the MMP system because it would preserve this province's strong local representation and enhance the overall proportionality of the Legislature. They believed it would do this by adding new seats that would be allocated according to each party's share of the total vote.

The second program run by the students' assembly secretariat encouraged more than 2,500 students in classrooms across Ontario to learn about electoral systems. Once they had completed the in-class unit, these classroom assembly participants were asked to vote for the system they preferred. Again, the overwhelming majority of students favoured changed and increased proportionality, while a strong 30% of student voters indicated that the province should retain its current system.

The students' assembly programs created a powerful opportunity for young Ontarians to learn about a political issue with real consequences for our future. We hope that it will set an important precedent for youth engagement in Ontario and become an important part of our province's democratic legacy. Many members, both government and opposition, had an opportunity to meet with the students' assembly. I know it was a very interesting and engaging activity for both students and members. The naïveté that we expected to see wasn't there. They were a very professional, enthusiastic group of students, and I think we're very lucky to have had that group participate.

An undertaking of this magnitude must have the solid support of Ontarians from across the province. I believe that this proposed legislation reflects the significance of this electoral reform and, indeed, is what we mean when we say the word "democracy." I think we believe so strongly in democracy that in fact our government has sent 68% of its bills to committee, compared to a mere 36% by the previous PC government. Fifty-four per cent of our government's bills have had a public hearing, as compared to 24% of the previous government's. Our government has time-allocated only 16% of its bills; the previous government time-allocated 49% of its bills, nearly half of the bills that it introduced. As a percentage of bills passed, our government has time-allocated 19%; the previous government time-allocated 62%, more than three times our government's percentage. That's a very powerful statistic.

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The public believes that this is an important issue, and I think they understand that we have not only walked the walk; we're talking the talk. We're trying to provide legislation that will respect the work that the citizens' assembly did, and we expect to provide them with legislation that honours the work that they've been doing since September.

This legislation is about our government's faith in the people of Ontario to make the best decision about the shape of our political system. We are very encouraged by so many Ontarians and their enthusiasm about participating in the referendum debate. We know how many people came out to the meetings that the citizens' assembly had, how enthusiastic they were, how they spent long hours in debate, asking questions, trying to learn about the system—and continue to do. I know that I have been stopped by people at my husband's Rotary Club and asked, "Is it too late to offer information?"—that was as late as three weeks ago—offering their best advice on how to improve the system. I think all of us have been really impressed by the thoughts that constituents across Ontario have provided on this issue. It's heartening. We trust the people of Ontario to approach this historic task thoughtfully and carefully and to choose a course of action that will ensure that Ontario continues to have a vital democracy for the future.

We think it's important to respond to the citizens' assembly recommendations in a timely manner, which is why this bill has been time-allocated. For the first time in our province's history, Ontarians are being asked to participate in a full, open debate on our electoral system. When we were watching TVO in the back room tonight, I think we saw a change in people's behaviour. Up until now people have been negative about this issue, fear-mongering about what could happen, but I think we're turning the page. I think we heard tonight individuals who had previously been negative about the opportunity for democratic renewal now having a new philosophy, understanding that it's time for a change. It's time for us to stop looking at the way things were and being afraid of change, and accepting and embracing that change. As somebody said on the television tonight, it's status quo plus. It gives us some opportunities.

This is historic. This is a historic time, and we're probably never going to get this opportunity again in our lifetime to make a change of this significance, of this magnitude. We as a government trust the people of Ontario to approach that task very thoughtfully. I know they're going to do their homework. I know they're going to be inundated with information. But they're up to the task. I believe that they really do have the best interests of how they're represented at heart. We know that they understand it's not going to happen again. We know that it's unprecedented for Ontarians to be able to participate in strengthening Ontario's democracy. No government in this province has ever given citizens this

kind of opportunity to shape how their government works. It's a healthy and exciting process. It might be a little scary, but it's healthy. It's democracy in action, a democracy that belongs to the citizens of Ontario, not just their elected officials.

I think we all think that debate in this House is the only place it should happen. It should happen on the streets. It should happen in Tim Hortons. It should happen in our kitchens. This is a healthy thing. The debate is good. It shouldn't be a threat to any good representative in this House. There are many good representatives in this House who do talk to their electorate and ask their opinions on things and reflect their opinions in this House. It's important that we embrace this change, that we look forward to the opportunity to have a different kind of dialogue so that not only will people be voting for the candidate on October 10; they'll have an opportunity to take a historic step, to take a ballot in their hand on a referendum issue that they've never had an opportunity to vote on before. I think that's critical.

Our party has enormous faith and respect for the members of the citizens' assembly who have dedicated so much time to this process. For that assembly and for the student assembly, we want to say thank you very much. Many people wouldn't have given up that time. We know they're a very special group. They were the average person but they were above average. They did a very extraordinary job for us and we thank them for that kind of time that they gave up with their families to become our 103 experts on this issue. They've provided great leadership and I know that they look forward to providing their report on May 15 to us to help us understand the rationale for their decision. I have every confidence that we're going to be enlightened by that report. I'm really looking forward to seeing it because I know they put a lot of work into it. We trust and respect their decision and we know that Ontarians will make a good decision on our future on October 10.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak about Bill 155, the electoral reform act. I think this is a good piece of legislation. We're acting in a timely fashion. We respect the work that the citizens' assembly did on our behalf, and we thank them for the time that they put in on our behalf and all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker: The time for debate has now expired.

Mr. Bradley has moved government motion number 324. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

There being more than five members standing, call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2117 to 2127.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour, please stand and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Brownell, Jim
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Fonseca, Peter
Gravelle, Michael
Jeffrey, Linda
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Matthews, Deborah
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.

Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Zimmer, David

Nays

Elliott, Christine
Ferreira, Paul
Kormos, Peter

Miller, Norm
Murdoch, Bill
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): The ayes are 31; the nays are 9.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The time now being after 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

The House adjourned at 2130.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and be recorded by the Clerk.

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No. 158A

N° 158A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 17 April 2007

Mardi 17 avril 2007



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 avril 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TOWING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): Last month, a severe winter storm caused a massive traffic accident on Highway 400 in Innisfil. Many cars, trucks and buses were involved. Many serious injuries were inflicted, but no loss of life occurred.

No loss of life occurring is a tribute to the fire, police and ambulance services that responded to the scene. However, there is one other responder who deserves our tribute.

Tow truck drivers worked bravely in terrible conditions to make rescues possible. One such driver was Glenn Currie of Currie Heavy Towing. He was at the controls of the biggest, strongest, most versatile heavy wrecker that day. He was assisted by others, but his role was central in lifting a tractor-trailer off a trapped driver, allowing the fire and ambulance personnel to remove that driver and save his life.

This is not the first time that Currie Heavy Towing has performed a task like this, and it will not be the last. They, like many other towers, do this without compensation. The Currie family does not request and will not accept any payment for life-saving emergency work. Glenn Currie, like his father, Alex Currie, is a humble man who does great things and is an inspiration to all residents of Ontario.

FOOD DRIVE

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): I rise in the House today to say thank you to all the generous people of London, Ontario, who have contributed to the London Food Bank's most successful annual spring food drive. The London Food Bank's annual spring food drive ended with a 17% increase in donations compared to previous years.

I'm proud that London is a community that pulls together to assist those who are in need. The food bank's 17% increase will result in 800 more people in London who will be helped by the food bank.

The generous contributions were not only from individuals in the London community but also from corporations like Freedom 55 Financial and others.

I am proud to stand up in this House as one of the four representatives elected by the people of London. London is a wonderful community to represent here at Queen's Park.

I would like to again thank everyone in London for their contributions, and I would also like to encourage all Ontarians to give back to their communities.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise to bring to the attention of the government members, ministers particularly, the great challenges currently facing farmers in the greenbelt area.

We all know that anybody can draw a green line on a map and colour it in. Real leadership requires making the tough but necessary decisions to invest in projects to ensure that initiatives in the greenbelt are successful.

Today we find ourselves with grape growers who grow juice grapes facing tremendous challenges with the closure of the Cadbury plant, meaning that at the end of this year those crops will not find a market. There are hundreds and, spreading out into the community, thousands of individuals broadly impacted by this decision. If the government is truly going to put taxpayers' money where its mouth is, they will invest and help our grape growers move on to other markets, particularly through a grape replant program, which I'll note did not receive a dime in this budget despite \$50 million going to Magna Corp., which is about to purchase Chrysler, I guess.

Secondly, Ontario beekeepers, particularly those in the Niagara Peninsula, are experiencing significant challenges. You may have seen the Toronto Star story today indicating 90% bee losses in many of the hives. This is important not only to the beekeepers themselves and their families but it has a tremendous impact on the tender fruit industry and the horticultural industry in general, not only in Erie–Lincoln but in St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Niagara Centre and across the greenbelt area.

If the government stands behind its legislation, it needs to invest in these two projects.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): It's clear that the Minister of the Environment is neither familiar with the Kyoto Protocol nor with the full implications of climate change. She has misread the NDP's climate action bill, which passed second reading last week, but

that's not the main problem. The main problem is that she does not have a sense of urgency. She is not bringing forward her own climate change plans. According to an article in the *Globe and Mail* by Murray Campbell, she's looking at a target of 10% below 1990 levels by 2020—far too slow.

The scientific community is generally agreed that haste and urgency are required. Last fall the World Wildlife Fund put out their paper noting that at a two-degree increase in world temperature, we were looking at massive disruption of ecosystems, spread of world hunger and loss of fresh water. The earth has already warmed 0.8 degrees since 1900, and we're looking at going to two degrees—that red line—as early as 2026.

The minister should expedite the passage of the NDP climate act bill. The minister should make sure it goes through committee, goes to third reading and is adopted. If we're going to deal with this problem, we can't wait till 2020. We need to move it forward today. We need to move it forward now.

CHARITY HOCKEY GAME

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): This past weekend, I was a witness to a historic event that took place in my riding of Thornhill. The B'nai Brith Youth Organization succeeded in breaking the Guinness world record for holding the longest floor hockey game ever played. The previous world record for the longest floor hockey game was held by the B'nai Brith youth chapter in Edmonton, which played for a total of 24 hours.

The event this past weekend took place at Rosedale Heights Public School in Thornhill, officially began at 8 p.m. on Saturday, April 14, and went uninterrupted until 8:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 15. The game was a resounding success. The brave group of 30 youths, which included players from Thornhill, Markham, Aurora, Richmond Hill and Toronto, played floor hockey non-stop for a total of 24.5 hours.

While the feat of breaking a world record is impressive in its own right, this occasion was made even more meaningful because proceeds were raised for two very worthwhile charities: the Shoot for a Cure Foundation, which raises money for spinal cord research, and Rebuild Homes, Rebuild Lives. The latter foundation is sending as many as 15 of the players who participated to New Orleans to help with the ongoing reconstruction from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

I would like to commend Ryan Bernkopf of the B'nai Brith Youth Organization, Lake Ontario chapter, for organizing this event and inviting me to participate as a witness.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise today because Premier McGuinty and David Caplan have refused to act on the suggestion to clean up the Lottogate scandal.

One constituent, Bob, said to me that he feels cheated, and he went on to say, "What is the Premier doing about it?" Here's the list since the CBC report and the Ombudsman's report. To date, we have had 145 questions on the OLG insider-winning scandal. That's 145 questions and zero answers. Dalton McGuinty will not accept responsibility or hold accountable his lottery minister, David Caplan. He fails the very test of ministerial responsibility, which his mother indeed followed.

1340

His government has also refused to answer our freedom-of-information requests. His government refuses to answer our order paper questions. And yesterday, the McGuinty government voted unanimously against an opposition day motion calling for an all-party committee of the Legislature to investigate this serious scandal.

"What are Dalton and David afraid of? What are they trying to cover up?" people are asking. "Will they ever do the right thing and take real action to restore confidence in the provincial lottery system?" My advice to them and to my constituents is, don't bet on it. You can't trust the policies coming from McGuinty.

But John Tory and the PC caucus will continue to press for accountability and integrity. The citizens of Ontario deserve no less, and they are looking for leadership they can trust.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'd just remind members early that the use of proper names isn't appropriate, that it should be the member's riding or the minister's position.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I rise in the Legislature today to remind Ontarians how the McGuinty Liberals have effectively moved forward to protect our natural environment and repair the damage that was done under the former Conservative government. Not only did the Tories increase emissions from coal by 127%, they also slashed the environment ministry budget, privatized water testing and left Walkerton residents with a horrendous water tragedy that residents will pay for for the rest of their lives.

The Leader of the Opposition is no different. Yesterday, he fell flat with a Harper-style announcement stating that he would reduce greenhouse gases 43 years from now. But don't worry, he would start the reduction somehow, in some way, in 13 years. We appreciate his endorsement for our plan to start replacing government vehicles with alternative fuels, to introduce energy efficiency in government buildings and to improve the building code to make homes more efficient, although there was one thing he was dead silent on yesterday, and that's the commitment to close the remaining coal-fired generating plants, which would be the single biggest way to reduce greenhouse gases. That's because the Liberals are the only party committed to closing those plants. Both opposition parties want to keep the plants open. We are going to close them.

I put this to the Legislature: If John Tory is really committed to the environment, why did his party vote against clean water, protecting green space, energy conservation, fighting toxic spills, expanding transit and renewable fuels?

YORK SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I rise in the House today to speak on the extension of the Spadina-York subway to York University and the third party's desire to slow down progress for GTA students, commuters and the business community as well. While the McGuinty Liberals are committed to ensuring that the subway moves forward, there are some in this Legislature who are opposed to progress.

We have worked with all levels of government to put the framework in place so this vital project can indeed be realized. We have committed the funding and we refuse to pull out. The McGuinty Liberals recognize the positive effects that this project will have for those in the surrounding region, but we also recognize that this will be a positive step towards keeping our air clean and our traffic moving.

Through investing in important initiatives like public transit, the McGuinty Liberals are demonstrating our commitment to fighting climate change and to working to curb the problems associated with urban sprawl. While the leader of the third party would like to kill the York subway extension, the McGuinty Liberals see its importance for commuters, students and Ontarians who want to begin to move towards a more environmentally sound Ontario.

We know there is always much more to be done, but the McGuinty Liberals, unlike the third party, are working to ensure that this vision is quickly realized.

INVESTMENT IN SAULT STE. MARIE

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): Last week the Leader of the Opposition, John Tory, was in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, and he said that residents were not seeing results under our government, proving that, once again, he and his party have no idea what's happening there. Let's look at the record.

We're investing \$100 million and have built the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, the first one built in Canada in more than 30 years. We're providing an unprecedented 90% funding for the new Sault Area Hospital, which we'll break ground on this year, while under the Conservatives the number of communities underserved by physicians grew from 63 to 142. They closed 28 public hospitals after promising not to cut health care spending. Now the Leader of the Opposition promises to take out the chainsaw and cut another \$2.6 billion from health care.

Education funding has increased in Sault Ste. Marie by over \$18 million, while the Conservatives closed 25

northern schools and underfunded education by \$2 billion.

Speaker, after five years of NDP mismanagement and eight years of Conservative indifference, we're getting results in Sault Ste. Marie. Our renewable energy program has allowed Algoma Steel to invest \$135 million in a cogeneration plant. We've helped Flakeboard expand with a \$5.2-million investment. We've provided \$15 million for a waterfront project, \$7.8 million for the new youth justice centre and \$4.7 for the Steelback Centre.

When the Conservatives were governing, they left us with a \$5.5-billion deficit that we've balanced.

The Conservatives can talk all they want about what they're going to do for Sault Ste. Marie, but we've delivered.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'ÉRECTION DE
PANNEAUX DANS LES PARCS
PROVINCIAUX ET À L'EMPLACEMENT
D'IMPORTANTES ATTRACTIONS
TOURISTIQUES PROVINCIALES
PROVINCIAL PARKS AND MAJOR
PROVINCIAL TOURIST ATTRACTIONS
SIGN ACT, 2007

M. Lalonde propose la première lecture du projet de loi suivant :

Projet de loi 207, Loi exigeant l'érection de panneaux bilingues dans les parcs provinciaux, dans les parcs sous le contrôle de la Commission des parcs du Niagara et à l'emplacement d'importantes attractions touristiques provinciales / Bill 207, An Act to require bilingual signs in provincial parks, parks under the control of the Niagara Parks Commission and at major provincial tourist attractions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): The bill proposes that unilingual signs be replaced by bilingual signs in provincial parks, parks under the control of the Niagara Parks Commission and at other prescribed provincial tourist attractions in Ontario as it becomes necessary to replace unilingual signs.

Last August, I just happened to be touring with a group from Belgium, France and Africa. We know there are over 13 million people, according to 2004 stats, visiting Niagara Falls every year, and out of that at least three million are francophones. During that tour, they were telling me that there were no signs in—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The time to debate the bill is during private members' business.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY
AMENDMENT ACT
(SPEAKER OF THE ASSEMBLY), 2007
LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
L'ACCÈS À L'INFORMATION ET LA
PROTECTION DE LA VIE PRIVÉE
(PRÉSIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLÉE)

Mr. Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 208, An Act to amend the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act respecting the Speaker of the Assembly / *Projet de loi 208, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée en ce qui a trait au président de l'Assemblée.*

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It is my understanding that this bill will make the Speaker's budget available so the public can access information on the association budgets. I question whether the bill is correct in that it is my understanding that association budgets are in fact part of the Legislative Assembly budget—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm not sure what the bill contains, the member for Prince Edward–Hastings, but at this point in time I don't believe it's a point of order.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Hardeman, Ernie	Prue, Michael
Bentley, Christopher	Horwath, Andrea	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Klees, Frank	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Kormos, Peter	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Runciman, Robert W.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Chan, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Savoline, Joyce
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Tabuns, Peter
Di Cocco, Caroline	Meilleur, Madeleine	Tascona, Joseph N.
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Norm	Tory, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Watson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Dunlop, Garfield	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Elliott, Christine	O'Toole, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Ferreira, Paul	Orazietti, David	Yakabuski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Smitherman, George

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Usually we don't have points of order during—no, no. I thought it was in relation to your vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 68; the nays are 1.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Mr. Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Perhaps the member for Niagara Centre would like to make a short statement.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This bill amends the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to provide that the act applies with respect to records in the custody of the Speaker, with the exception of records that pertain to his or her role as a member of the assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Now, the point of order: the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

VISITORS

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I would like to welcome in the gallery Paolo Ponti, the Italian trade commissioner, who is with us here today. Mr. Ponti, welcome.

1400

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE
AND SCHOOL SAFETY), 2007
LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION
(DISCIPLINE PROGRESSIVE
ET SÉCURITÉ DANS LES ÉCOLES)

Ms. Wynne moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 212, An Act to amend the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety / *Projet de loi 212, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne le comportement, la discipline et la sécurité.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Would the minister like to make a short statement?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): During ministerial statements, Mr. Speaker.

RECOGNITION OF SIGN LANGUAGE
AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE ACT, 2007
LOI DE 2007 RECONNAISSANT
LA LANGUE DES SIGNES
COMME LANGUE OFFICIELLE

Mr. Parsons moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 213, An Act to recognize sign language as an official language in Ontario / *Projet de loi 213, Loi visant à reconnaître la langue des signes comme langue officielle en Ontario.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Would the member like to make a short statement?

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): Many of our fellow citizens who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing at times experience difficulty accessing public services. This bill, if passed, would recognize sign language as an official language in Ontario in the courts, in education and in the Legislative Assembly.

VISITORS

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to introduce two representatives of the Toronto Professional Fire Fighters' Association: Scott Marks, who is the president; and Rick Berenz, who is the executive director.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion respecting the modification of two government orders.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that the order of the House dated April 11, 2007, allocating time for proceedings on Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters, and the order of the House dated April 16, 2007, allocating time for proceedings on Bill 155, An Act to provide for a referendum on Ontario's electoral system, shall be modified to the extent necessary to provide the following:

The standing orders for second reading of Bill 187 and third reading of Bill 155 shall be called consecutively at the outset of the orders of the day today and any required divisions on these bills shall be deferred and taken in succession, the members called in once, the division bells limited to 10 minutes and the chamber doors unlocked for 30 seconds between the two divisions; and

All the other provisions of the two time allocation orders shall otherwise continue to apply, and this afternoon's debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 198, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario's water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act, shall be considered a full sessional day for the purposes of standing order 46.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved that the order of the House dated April 11, 2007, allocating time for proceedings—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Dispense? Dispense. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SCHOOL SAFETY

LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES ÉCOLES

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education):

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge David Clark, who is the chair of the Guelph Police Services Board and chair of the Community Task Force on Youth Violence, and Inspector Mark Allen, who is with the crime prevention section of the OPP, who are both here at the introduction of this legislation.

In December 2004, the McGuinty government directed the safe schools action team to review the safe schools provisions of the Education Act and related policies and programs. Through its review, the safe schools action team found serious discrepancies in consistency and fairness in the application of the safe schools provisions of the Education Act. It is clear from its report that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work when it comes to student safety and discipline. The McGuinty government believes that all students and staff have the right to feel safe at school and on school grounds.

Des écoles sûres sont une condition préalable au rendement des élèves et l'une de nos plus hautes priorités.

That is why I'm pleased to rise in the House today to highlight steps we are taking to build on our safe schools strategy. Earlier today, I announced proposed amendments to the safe schools provisions of the Education Act that would more effectively combine discipline with opportunities for students to continue their education. These amendments would ensure that there are strong consequences for inappropriate behaviour and provide programs so students can earn their way back into the classroom and complete their education.

Notre objectif est d'avoir une meilleure sécurité dans les écoles et une discipline qui marche.

The proposed legislative amendments would include adding bullying as an infraction for which suspensions must be considered. We also propose using a progressive discipline approach to choose the appropriate punishment in each case of inappropriate behaviour. For example, punishments could include in-school suspensions, referrals for consultation and other options, and this would be done before suspension or expulsion.

Another change would include replacing mandatory suspensions and expulsions for students, except in limited circumstances, with the requirement that principals and school boards consider and respond to all infractions that occurred in the most appropriate way. For infractions which currently carry a mandatory suspension, consider-

ation will now be given to suspension as one measure along a continuum of progressive discipline.

Cela nous permettra d'assurer la sécurité de tous les élèves.

We will invest \$31 million in 2007-08 to make Ontario's schools safer. Our government's investment will help build capacity in school boards to address inappropriate student behaviour, and provide training to principals and vice-principals on how to apply discipline in a non-discriminatory manner, including considerations for anti-racism, cross-cultural differences, and accommodating students with disabilities. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just acknowledge the Ontario Human Rights Commission and Chief Commissioner Barbara Hall, who is with us today and who has worked with us on these provisions. That investment includes \$23 million for supports to address inappropriate behaviour, including programs for all expelled students and students serving long-term suspensions. These programs would be designed to address the causes of the problem behaviour that has led to students being suspended or expelled and allow them to continue learning outside the classroom.

These proposed improvements follow up on the recommendations made by the safe schools action team, which was led ably by Liz Sandals, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. I want to thank Liz Sandals and all the members of the safe schools action team for their important work on this issue.

Today's announcement builds on significant steps the McGuinty government has already taken with our education partners to make Ontario's schools safer, important steps such as bullying prevention training for teachers, principals and vice-principals, model projects to promote positive student behaviour, a partnership with Kids Help Phone to provide more resources for bullying prevention, including cyber bullying, and security devices for schools as part of a safe welcome program to help monitor school visitors.

Nous savons que la sécurité dans les écoles est un élément clé de la réussite des élèves dans leurs études et dans leur vie.

That is why the McGuinty government is doing more to make Ontario schools safer for our students in school and for the rest of their lives.

1410

CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

CHARTE CANADIENNE DES DROITS ET LIBERTÉS

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): Happy anniversary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I rise in the House today to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Twenty-five years ago, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II gave royal assent to the Canada Act, 1982. In doing so,

she brought Canada into a new era of sovereignty and self-determination.

In its last act in relation to Canada, the British Parliament permanently gave up its ability to amend the Canadian Constitution and placed this responsibility in the hands of Canadians.

Pour la première fois, les droits et les libertés fondamentaux de tous les résidents du Canada étaient énoncés clairement et concrètement.

The charter constitutionally guarantees freedoms and rights that had long been considered integral to the Canadian way but were never formally recognized as such. The first 25 years of the charter saw the development of constitutionally protected rights and freedoms through a series of decisions that sometimes radically changed our laws and legal processes. The charter is a vital source in our society because of the principles that it embodies, but also because it allows anyone to call on its protections through ordinary courts and tribunals.

Charter challenges have helped to shape our laws and our country, leading to the end of legal discrimination based on sexual orientation, and ended discrimination in the areas of gender equality, ethnicity, religion and a number of other areas involving immutable characteristics. It led to the end of legal prohibitions against abortion. It led to the end of mandatory denominational prayers in public schools, the end of Sunday shopping prohibition and much, much more.

The charter asks us, as lawmakers, to go the extra mile, to take extra steps when writing laws and formulating policy in order to meet higher standards guaranteed by the charter. This improves our laws and improves us as a democracy.

Over the years, the principles of the charter have come to represent the very essence of being Canadian. A 2002 survey found that 82% of Canadians believe that the Charter of Rights has a major positive impact on the protection of their rights and freedoms; 81% believe that the charter has become an important symbol of Canadian identity. Double-doubles, the maple leaf, hockey tape, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms: these are the touchstones of our Canadian identity.

The Charter of Rights has evolved into a unique Canadian interpretation of rights. This model has come to be seen as an international leader. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Canadians should all be proud of the charter and what it represents.

It's been a key instrument used to build the multicultural fabric of our nation. Pluralism does not equal relativism, but the charter has promoted respect for the religious rights of others and helps to ensure that cultural heritage is accommodated in a reasonable fashion. By encouraging tolerance and respect for the differences among us, it brings our society together.

Having the courts act as the ultimate arbiters of charter disputes promotes a more just society. The independence of our courts, not subject to political pressure, whim or the sometime tyranny of the majority, ensures the rule of law. This promotes the peaceful and productive resolution of legal conflicts and questions.

In the first 25 years of the charter, great attention was paid to the judges' decisions and how they interpret the charter. I have no doubt that in the next 25 years, focus will be upon their hopefully unassailable independence.

Speaking of the courts, I would be remiss if I did not mention the important historic role that the former Attorney General and soon-to-retire Chief Justice of Ontario, Roy McMurtry, made in the creation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I should also mention that the role that Ian Scott made in expanding the constitutional law branch across the government—the constitutional law branch that had been created by Roy McMurtry—has meant that every single ministry in the government has, for some time now, been infused with its charter of responsibilities.

So, ladies and gentlemen, members of the Legislature, the charter is out of its infancy and adolescence. A still-young nation celebrates a great anniversary today. Happy anniversary to the charter. Happy anniversary to all Canadians.

DANIEL BURNHAM AWARD

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I rise today to share news about how the McGuinty government has been recognized as a leader on the world stage for our work in promoting strategic sustainable growth in this province.

Representatives from Ontario's growth secretariat are currently in Philadelphia as part of the American Planning Association's annual conference. Today, Assistant Deputy Minister Brad Graham of the OGS received on behalf of the government of Ontario, indeed the people of Ontario, the 2007 Daniel Burnham Award for comprehensive planning for our government's growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. The Burnham award is considered by planners across North America to be the profession's highest distinction. I'm proud to say that this marks the first time in the history of the APA planning awards that a jurisdiction outside the United States has won this award.

The plan was created under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, but a large and diverse group of people across this province can also take credit for the accomplishment. Stakeholders, policy-makers, professional planners, government officials, local elected officials, environmentalists, developers and many, many engaged citizens of the province participated in the development of the growth plan. Indeed, members from across the way in past governments have led much of the foundational work, and we should all be proud of the recognition that comes with winning the Burnham award.

I'm proud to report that this plan has received unprecedented support from our partners in municipal government right across the greater Golden Horseshoe. In fact, His Worship David Miller, mayor of Toronto, said, "The greater Golden Horseshoe plan puts Ontario on the map as an international leader in sustainable community development."

One prominent planner, Carol Rhea of the American Institute of Certified Planners, has said, and again I quote, "This plan is a landmark comprehensive plan that is both visionary and pragmatic. It provides a strategic, innovative and coordinated approach to sustainable growth and development for 110 different municipalities."

Our province is booming. Nearly four million more people will be arriving within the greater Golden Horseshoe over the next quarter-century. Planning for growth means creating opportunity, complete communities with vibrant and diverse urban centres, while reducing development pressures on our important agricultural and natural areas. The people who are going to live in this area are going to need the right form of transit and transportation to help them to get around, the right kind of public amenities and communities to live in, and a clean and sustainable environment. In short, we are planning complete communities where people want to live, work and play.

The award-winning growth plan that the McGuinty government has developed will help to ensure we can continue to prosper. We're going to ensure that all this growth happens in a strategic way, a way that strengthens our economy and sustains our development while keeping the environment at the forefront of our planning efforts.

Our government has developed the growth plan in concert with many other key initiatives, such as ReNew Ontario, a multi-year, multi-billion dollar infrastructure investment plan to support the implementation of the growth plan; a legislated plan brought forward by my colleague John Gerretsen, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, that permanently protects a 1.8-million-acre greenbelt in the heart of the greater Golden Horseshoe—congratulations to Minister Gerretsen on that; major reforms to Ontario's laws governing how land use planning takes place; as well as efforts across various government ministries in brownfields redevelopment and planning.

I am indeed proud of the recognition that we have received from the American Planning Association's 2007 Daniel Burnham Award for a comprehensive plan.

"Innovative," "progressive," "groundbreaking," "cutting-edge": Those are some of the words that others are using to describe the work of the McGuinty government, and this is yet another example of Ontario being a leader on the world stage. As Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, I want to express to all of our partners involved in this historic, and indeed now award-winning, growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe my sincere and heartfelt congratulations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Responses?

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): In response to the Minister of Education's tabling of amendments to the Safe Schools Act today, I want to be clear that we sup-

port any measures to enhance school safety, to ensure that suspensions and expulsions, if necessary, are administered fairly and without prejudice or discrimination, and that the appropriate supports are in place for those students who have the need.

1420

With regard to the proposed bill, however, we have serious concerns about the government's priorities and ability or commitment to implement this bill. Unfortunately, today's announcement is vintage McGuinty: long on rhetoric, short on substance. What concerns me most is that the minister appears not to know what's in the bill. On the one hand we are told, and the minister would have us believe, that this bill would put an end to mandatory suspensions, yet the bill makes suspensions mandatory for the same list of activities as in the existing bill.

When asked in the press conference if suspended students would be required, on a mandatory basis, to attend alternative programs to help them, she said, "No, it would be voluntary," yet the bill states that it would be mandatory for a student expelled to be assigned to a program for expelled students, and we support that. We support that students should have the appropriate supports, that the appropriate resources would be provided to our schools and our school boards to help those students who are having challenges within the school body.

We are disappointed that not one cent of the \$31 million committed in her announcement today goes to those programs that would help students—not one cent.

We would also suggest, finally, that there was nothing in today's announcement to respond to the Ontario Principals' Council safety concerns in our schools, that the Ontario Principals' Council says safety is in jeopardy in our schools today because of a lack of supervision created by this government's policy.

We will support whatever it takes to ensure safety in our schools. We'll support changes to the legislation that are necessary. But we are going to monitor very carefully this government's ability to implement the objectives that it has stated.

CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to join the minister in celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The charter guarantees freedoms and protections that reflect the fundamental principles of justice rooted in our country's collective conscience. In enshrining equality rights, language rights, minority language and education rights among other such protections, Canada became a true leader on the world stage with respect to honouring our commitment to freedom.

It is our essential responsibility as legislators to ensure that the practices and policies of government indeed

reflect and uphold the rights guaranteed by the charter, and I would question this government's commitment to this responsibility, given the fact that it has taken them three years to allocate any meaningful funds to a starving legal aid system and, after having muzzled the vulnerable by cutting off public hearings in a rush to pass Bill 107, the human rights reform legislation, they have indicated that they will not proclaim this legislation until well after the next election.

DANIEL BURNHAM AWARD

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal's statement about Brad Graham, the ADM, being in Philadelphia to receive an award.

Minister, this sounds a lot like the statement you made on December 19, 2006, about Brad Graham on his way to Philadelphia to receive this award. We certainly look forward to the announcement of Brad Graham's safe return to Pearson International Airport, bringing his award home. I do hope the minister this time—as I asked him to correct the record last time—recognizes the role of the previous Progressive Conservative government in the Smart Growth strategy that underlines this plan.

I would say to the minister that hopefully, though, he knows that I asked in estimates back in November for a list of the infrastructure projects that underline this plan, the funding assigned and the start dates. I remind the minister that he has not yet responded to my estimates request.

Secondly, there is an order paper question asking for the public infrastructure investments, the time frames and the dollars assigned to them. I hope the minister responds to this, because he knows a plan with lots of coloured pictures and diagrams is all well and nice on a bookshelf; it's the infrastructure investments that count.

So I hope Brad Graham sees the Liberty Bell; maybe catches a Sixers game; maybe goes to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, sees the Rocky Balboa poster, puts his dukes in the air, does a little dance and then comes back here, kicks the minister in the butt and says, "Get on with the infrastructure announcements or the actual programs. Put the dollars where your mouth is, aside from the same announcements over and over again."

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): In response to the Minister of Education, in 2003, during the election campaign you said you would scrap the Safe Schools Act. In December 2004, you said you would have a report by the spring of 2005. In the spring, you said you'd have something by the fall. In the fall, you said the report would be complete by 2006. Now, in 2007, you add another safe school guideline: anti-bullying as it relates to cyber-bullying, and we support that. My worry is that you've introduced it at such a time

that it is quite possible you will not have the time to debate it, and these amendments are likely not to pass. We'll—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): When the ministers spoke, I seem to recall that we had the attention of all the members. I would hope that the same courtesy is extended during the responses:

Mr. Marchese: We'll be here until the end of June and beyond, and we hope you will as well. That will give us the opportunity to debate the bill and discuss its merits and lack of. But I want to tell you: You did this review, and the review focused on a number of topics, including consistency. We've known for a long time it could never be consistent, but you had to study that.

Fairness: Some groups were seen to be more likely to be suspended or expelled. We've known for years. It wasn't a perception that some groups were seen to be more likely. The human rights commission told you on a number of occasions through its studies. It's a fact that students of colour and students with disabilities were being discriminated against, expelled and/or suspended. You talk about discipline. There was a perception that there should be more judgment, as if we didn't know that, but you had to study that. Okay.

Prevention: There was a perception that the safe schools legislation focused more on discipline than on preventing behaviours leading to suspensions. As if we didn't know that. Okay, but you had to study that. For years we've told you, "Keep students in the school system." Provide alternative programs, such as the Toronto board did and York was doing at the time. We've told you for four long years, but you had to study it again, knowing what the human rights commission said, knowing what the NDP was telling you. But yes, okay, you had to do a thorough study of the matter.

Then you come up with this, and do you know what's missing, Minister? I suspect you know but you don't want to say. And you won't say, but I'm going to help you. What's missing is the following: What we need in the schools is adult supervision. What we need are youth workers who actually deal with students at risk, youth workers whom we used to have in the educational system and who disappeared under the previous regime and you have not brought back. They helped students at risk. There's nothing here that deals with that. We have no youth counsellors. We have no social workers. We're losing them.

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: We're losing educational assistants, for the rump over here that doesn't listen very well. We're losing educational assistants who help in the special education classroom and deal with special needs. We are missing these people who work with students who've got mental illness, who've got a special education problem, who've got serious problems that need people with whom to work. If you don't have that, we won't solve these problems.

So we're looking forward to the debate. We want to be here until the end of the June to be able to discuss these issues with you.

DANIEL BURNHAM AWARD

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I'm going to address the remarks of the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Very simply, the Liberals' growth management plan will not curb sprawl. It will not stop gridlock on our highways. When this issue came before estimates, I asked the minister—

Interjections.

Mr. Tabuns: Mr. Speaker, what can I say? I know the truth hurts and that's why there's so much bellowing from the other side. But the truth is that the minister cannot say to what extent his plans are going to reduce congestion or gridlock. He cannot say—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Stop the clock. I'll ask once again that the attention and courtesy be given to the speaker who has the floor. The ministers had that courtesy; I think the responses should as well.

The member for Trinity–Spadina—or Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Tabuns: A Toronto member nonetheless. As I was saying, the minister cannot say to what extent this will actually improve the situation. In fact, when you look at Canadian think tanks—the Neptis Foundation and the Pembina Institute—they say that the plan as written will not be different from business as usual. The projections of increased travel time for people in the greater Golden Horseshoe are there for everyone to see. We will spend more time in our cars, more time away from home. That's because the plan that was put forward has been weakened and weakened and weakened, and the roads that are being built to facilitate sprawl that were not in the initial plan that are going forward—the extension of Highway 404 to Ravenshoe, an extension that will allow sprawl to leapfrog the greenbelt—mean that what the minister has brought forward is simply a recipe for more sprawl and congestion.

1430

JUNE CALLWOOD

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes to recognize the passing of social activist June Callwood.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Do we have consent? Thank you.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): It is somewhat of a daunting task to find the words that capture a spirit as vibrant as June Callwood. In fact, so many come to mind and to heart: courageous, committed, caring, crusading, passionate, persistent, unselfish, undeniable and, most certainly,

unstoppable. But today I'm going to choose one word above all others to capture June, and that word is "defiant." June defied convention. At a time when society still debated whether women should make a home or make a living, she set out to make a difference.

June defied tragedy. She turned the loss of her youngest child, Casey, into a miracle called Casey House.

June defied fashion. When society mistrusted street kids, she housed them. When it hid spousal abuse, she shielded its victims. When it met AIDS with fear and ignorance, she embraced those ravaged by the disease with love and understanding. And when each of these endeavours seemed impossible, she defied the odds and succeeded.

Even now, June defies description. She was a journalist who wouldn't settle for the sidelines. She was a writer, but a doer. She was a champion of the underdog who believed in enlisting the rich and powerful. She was a rabble-rouser who held the country's highest honour, Companion of the Order of Canada. She was a small-town girl who won over our biggest city. She was absolutely convinced that she could change the world, and yet she displayed no ego.

June even defied gravity. Her refuge was to soar in a glider high above the earth, which seems somewhat fitting, for she rose above private tragedy, public obstacles, petty disputes and even, on occasion, personal attack.

Most of all, June Callwood defied cynicism. She refused to believe that nothing could be done. She was resolute in the belief that everything was possible.

Son message était très clair lorsqu'elle a dit : « À partir du moment où vous constatez une injustice, vous cessez d'être un simple témoin. Vous avez l'obligation de faire quelque chose; sinon, vous participez à cette injustice. »

June's message to all of us was clear when she said, "If any of you happens to see an injustice, you are no longer a spectator, you are a participant. And you have an obligation to do something."

I had the good fortune to see June shortly before we put out our last budget. I knew she was sick. I'd certainly heard that she was sick, but I couldn't tell by looking at her. She seemed to defy cancer as well. I took the opportunity to thank her for all she had done for so long, on behalf of so many. She was much more interested in telling me why our budget needed to help children growing up in poverty. On the one hand, she was such a gentle person; on the other, she had this remarkable steely resolve when it came to making her case.

Just before the meeting ended, I asked her if she would honour Ontario's best volunteers by allowing us to rename our Outstanding Achievement Award for Volunteerism as the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Awards for Voluntarism. She said yes, and she seemed quite moved by this. I remember her saying to me, "To think: All this for a girl from Belle River." I said, "You've come a long way from Belle River," and she

gently corrected me and said, "No, I never really left," which I took as a testament to her lifelong humility.

June never set out in life to be something; she wanted to do something for others, whether her family, her friends, her community.

A few weeks later, I visited June in the hospital. My intention was to lift her spirits. Instead, she lifted mine. That was June.

There has been lots of talk these past few days about the loss of an icon and whether those shoes can ever really be filled. It's only natural for us to lament such a tremendous loss, but I think June would want us to defy that sort of conventional thinking and focus instead on the future.

There are literally thousands and thousands of remarkable young women in our province who volunteer every day in places like Toronto and Ottawa, Cornwall and Belle River, who dedicate themselves to making a difference. What's more, this new generation of defiant souls see themselves as citizens of the world. So they are also travelling to places like South America, Africa and southeast Asia, because they feel what June felt—an obligation to do something—and they have learned from June and women like her that they can do anything. In this sense, June, you have even defied death, because your example, your inspiration and your kindness will live forever.

Our thoughts and prayers are with June's family and especially her husband, Trent, and her children, Jill, Brant and Jesse. We thank them for sustaining June and for sharing her with us.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): If I can follow where the Premier left off, it is hard to know where to begin when it comes to June Callwood—writer, broadcaster, social activist, volunteer. She was an extraordinary person in every respect. She wielded a huge influence through what she said and what she wrote, but I think the greatest influence, the biggest difference she made, came from what she did and who she was.

I first met June Callwood as a young boy, as she was a good friend of my late grandmother. My grandmother was herself a noted community activist who devoted a lot of her time to helping the poor. Most of my encounters as an adult were not as an elected official but through our encounters in community and charitable work. As I said in my statement on her passing, you always knew where she stood and you always knew at the same time where she expected you to stand, and that is exactly as it should have been.

Former Prime Minister Paul Martin once said that he was afraid of her, but this was later interpreted by June Callwood's friend Rabbi Arthur Beilfeldas being "an expression of respect and admiration of her moral authority." I think the rabbi understood the June Callwood effect very well, that moral authority came from who she was as a person and what she did.

I went to Casey House last night to sign the book of condolences and, as you would expect, there was a steady stream of people in and out, flowers lined up against the

fence. I flipped through the book after I signed, and there were notes there from the Lieutenant Governor and from many prominent people, but page after page, the vast majority of the many pages, were filled with notes from average citizens who said things like, "I never met you, but I want to thank you," or they said, in many cases, "I intend to give some of my time in the future as a tribute to you and to carry on some of the work you did." It's consistent with what the Premier just said. It really was remarkable to see these people, average people who didn't know her and never met her, but she had obviously moved them and motivated them in her lifetime and by her passing.

I should say by way of one additional observation about that book of condolence that while the written tributes weren't confined by any means to the HIV/AIDS community, there were many which spoke very eloquently to what June Callwood had done, not just in a practical sense but, as they described it, in terms of the rights, dignity and self-respect of members of that community and their families.

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If you look at the history of Casey House, it sprang in part from a group of people who came together to care for Margaret Frazer, a teacher, a social activist and a feminist who had been diagnosed herself with terminal cancer in 1985. June Callwood wrote a book about the experiences of the group that helped, of which she was part, of course, called *Twelve Weeks in Spring*, the proceeds from which formed part of the initial financial underpinnings for Casey House itself. In that book, June Callwood had this to say, referring to Margaret Frazer:

"One of the lessons of Margaret's death is a redefinition of friendship.... She needed help and people came together suddenly to give it, but most of them were little more than acquaintances of hers. Very few were friends in the way the word is normally meant: that intimate relationship with someone whose loyalty and support have been tested, someone who has become as close as kin."

This may well explain the essence of June Callwood's magic. She had, in some respects, her own definition of friendship, which may in fact have been a redefinition of citizenship, which says that you don't just stand by and watch people suffer, whether they are victims of domestic violence, disadvantaged people or street kids. Indeed, it may be that that view of citizenship is also summed up by another passage I found in *Twelve Weeks in Spring*, which I thought worth sharing. June Callwood said this:

"Palliative care shouldn't be reserved for the Margaret Frazers who happen to have spent a solid ten years of their lives helping others. If the human community can't make itself into a tribe to help someone, anyone in trouble, it isn't worth saving from the bomb."

This is vintage June Callwood—some of the characteristics the Premier described of her personality.

Many people were in awe with regard to the serenity with which June Callwood accepted the end of her life,

and that includes me. I found a passage in a column she wrote in the *Globe and Mail* in 1989 dealing with what she called "the challenge of parting." Here is what she said:

"A human passage is marked by roads not taken.... At the end of the day the pattern of departures is random and whimsical. The old are tantalized by the lives they didn't live."

In June Callwood's case, I think it's very fair to say that there weren't too many good roads not taken. I don't think there were any lives not lived which tantalized or traumatized her as she faced the end. She could go with serenity and with her fighting spirit intact.

I think the greatest tribute we can pay to her is to do what the people who signed the book said they would do, and the Premier made reference to this as well: to volunteer for something, to take up a cause, to carry on her work.

To Trent Frayne and to the Frayne-Callwood children and the extended family, we express our condolences but also our gratitude for the life of June Callwood and for the support and inspiration they gave to her throughout. To June Callwood, we simply say thank you.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): We celebrate the life of a truly remarkable woman: a journalist, an author, a mother, a wife, a pilot, a feminist, a political activist—all of those things characterize June Callwood but none of them completely describes her. Her legacy has many aspects; probably the most enduring, though, was her strength and her humanity. She was a fighter for equality, a liberator, using her words as her weapon. Callwood left behind, and leaves behind, a rich legacy as a journalist, a writer and a social activist.

She once said, "If you see an injustice being committed, you aren't an observer, you are a participant." That's why I believe she was known as Canada's conscience.

Throughout her life, she fought for equality and she preached courage. She spoke her mind and pulled no punches. She was a woman who didn't tell government what to do; she went out and did it herself. She founded or helped to found more than 50 social organizations. She passionately exposed the tears in Canada's social fabric and was compelled to work to change them. She was a trailblazer for women's rights, gay rights and the rights of the underprivileged, with a history of activism going back over 40 years.

She started by founding Digger House, a shelter for homeless youth, in the late 1960s. She then went on to found Nellie's, one of Canada's first shelters for women in crisis, in 1974, and then Jessie's Centre for Teenagers in 1982. In 1988, she founded Casey House Hospice, named after her dear lost son. Casey House was the first hospice in the world to provide support and palliative care for people afflicted with HIV/AIDS, at a time when little was yet known about the disease and the ignorance and fear surrounding it was intense.

I suspect probably every member of this Legislature, present and past, has received a fund-raising letter from

June Callwood for Casey House or been asked to attend a fund-raising function. In fact, I expect that virtually every member of this Legislature has been reached by June Callwood in some way or fashion. I know the member for Parkdale-High Park worked with June Callwood on a number of social issues, especially with her at Nellie's as a volunteer when it first opened and then later at Margaret Frazer House.

One of the most challenging meetings I ever had as Attorney General was a meeting with June Callwood, who came through the door, was polite and dignified but obviously had spent a great deal of time thinking out exactly what she was asking for and thinking out the plan of action, about how to do it. At the end of the meeting, you felt compelled to take up the cause, because here was someone who conducted herself with such dignity, with such intelligence and with such compassion that you felt compelled to take on the cause and to follow her lead. She motivated us, she encouraged us and she inspired us to make our world a better place.

This will not be the end of June Callwood. It may be the passing of June Callwood, but it will not be the end, because she has left such a rich legacy, which will go on.

Callwood once said in an interview in 2004, "If there is any kind of message in the way I've lived, it's that we're here to take care of one another. It was Kurt Vonnegut who said that we're all in this together, whatever 'this' is. That's how I feel, that we're in it to help one another." And she firmly believed that this is how people should always conduct themselves.

Our thoughts are with June Callwood's husband, Trent Frayne, her children, her family, her extended family and her friends. We have lost a great Canadian, but her work will go on, and her work will lead many of us to do better work ourselves.

The Deputy Speaker: Please stand and join me in a few moments of silent remembrance and respect.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Deputy Speaker: Of course we will see that the Callwood family receives the remarks from Hansard today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier, and it concerns the lottery scandal. Last night, you used your parliamentary majority to crush our motion that would refer this entire scandal to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. Once upon a time, this move would have outraged you, as the former member for Ottawa South, Dalton McGuinty, as opposed to the Dalton McGuinty who sits as Premier today. The former member for Ottawa South,

Dalton McGuinty, said the following in 1991, and I quote from Hansard:

"Our public and our traditions of fairness demand that this matter be reviewed by a committee of this House. The course that the government members of the committee have embarked the committee upon means that this government has no intention of dealing with this matter publicly and fairly. Government members have accused us of being on a witchhunt. We are on a hunt—a hunt for the facts, and we will pursue those facts relentlessly, rigorously and unfailingly."

My question for the Premier is this: Why did you use your parliamentary majority to crush our attempts to do exactly what you said you would have done and thought should be done in similar circumstances in 1991? What do you have to hide?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I can't recall those words back in 1991, but something tells me we were not presented in opposition with an Ombudsman's report and an independent objective analysis of the issue at hand. Something tells me that the government of the day had not turned the matter over to the Ontario Provincial Police. Something tells me that the government of the day had not moved ahead on some very specific recommendations to restore confidence in whatever was broken in the first instance. Something tells me that those circumstances were markedly different from the circumstances that obtain today and the approach that's been taken by our government to restore public confidence in Ontario's lottery system.

Mr. Tory: I think the Premier would have said at that time, in 1991, when he was Dalton McGuinty, the member for Ottawa South, that really what was not being addressed and what he wanted to see addressed at that time was the question of ministerial accountability, the question of what the government did, what its response was, what it knew, when it knew it and so on. But before seeing his values changed by the power of the Premier's office, this is what Dalton McGuinty, the Leader of the Opposition, had to say: "There are many, many more questions that we feel ought to be answered, and for that reason once again I'm asking you to allow this House, through an all-party legislative committee, to subpoena witnesses and have them answer questions under oath." I believe that was in December 1996.

That's an attitude that makes a lot of sense. Perhaps the Premier can explain why a move of about two metres from this seat here to that seat over there has caused his opinion to change so dramatically about the need for accountability, for an independent investigation and for a legislative committee to be able to get to the root of these matters and find out the truth.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): The member is quite aware that this government has

taken very quick and decisive action where previous governments decided to sweep these matters under the rug. Where they looked the other way and would not take the proper action, we've called in KPMG, one of Canada's leading independent auditing firms, I believe. They should be quite familiar to the member opposite. They are the auditing firm for your political party. Indeed, they've welcomed the Ombudsman and his independent investigation into this matter, probably one of the most thorough and sweeping investigations we've seen. In addition to that, they have directed that the materials that were reviewed by the Ombudsman be turned over to the Ontario Provincial Police for their review.

But in addition to that, all members should want to know that quick and decisive action has been taken to implement some of the 60 recommendations of both the Ombudsman and KPMG. Seventeen have already been implemented. An additional 25 should be complete by the end of June. The other 18 have begun and are ongoing.

This is in marked contrast to the approach of previous governments. This has not only lived up to but exceeded the kind of standard we saw previously. We've shone a light on these matters, we are getting to the bottom of them and are quickly implementing the appropriate—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary.

Mr. Tory: I hope the Premier will choose to answer these, because these are statements he made. Here's one from 1996 when he was on this side of the House that is very reasonable and applies very well to the lottery scandal. He said this: "If the Premier is convinced that the minister has nothing to hide, then why not agree to the all-party legislative inquiry? Do the minister a favour. He's going to be hanging under a cloud after the result of this commissioner's inquiry. There's always going to be a lingering doubt. Do the minister a favour. Give him the opportunity to come before a legislative committee." Once again, a very reasonable statement and one I find myself agreeing with.

The question for the Premier—because it's his statement—is this: Why the 180-degree turn from what he was saying just a few years ago? There can only be one of two answers: either you didn't mean it then or you're trying to hide something today. I think we will choose door number two. What are you trying to hide? Why won't you refer this to a legislative committee so that we could have a full airing?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact the leader of the official opposition is quite wrong. The Ombudsman has commented on the actions of myself and the government. In his report—and I understand that members opposite don't wish to accept the Ombudsman's finding—he says, "I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change."

In fact, for eight years we saw government members on the other side—if you look to your left and right—

who sat in the cabinet of the day who would not call one agency before the standing committee on government agencies. It took this Premier and this government, with a commitment to transparency, with a commitment to reforming the institutions of this House, redemocratizing it, to ensure that the government and members are empowered to be able to look at agencies.

The Deputy Speaker: Response.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, the standing committee on government agencies was chaired by a member of your own caucus. They looked into government agencies and in fact three more government agencies—that will be six in four years—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Tory: This minister is so amusing. Redemocratization of the House? This is the only government I've heard of that brought in time allocation on a piece of democratic renewal legislation. They take credit for all of the things they did after they got caught.

My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, you instructed your caucus members to use your majority, not to do time allocation this time, but to stop a legislative inquiry from happening—yet another attempt to obscure and cover up this scandal. We're not going to let you cover up this scandal. We're going to use whatever tools we have to get to the bottom of this lottery rip-off. We are going to use the selections available to us through the estimates process to call the Premier and the minister before the committee to answer questions they have refused to answer in the House.

Will the Premier show some leadership and commit here and now to appearing before the standing committee on estimates to answer any and all questions that the committee might have for him? Will you commit to doing that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, I have already had an opportunity to attend the estimates committee to answer all questions that were put.

I can assure you, the member from Erie—Lincoln did in fact request information and was provided information through that process. I look forward to asking members opposite, because I do know—and the leader of the official opposition has indicated—that both Mr. Hudak and Mr. Sterling were former ministers at the period of time the Ombudsman talked about, when they looked away.

I'd like to pose some questions: What did they know? When did they know it? Why didn't they take the appropriate action?

I look at the Ombudsman's comments from his March 26 press conference when he says, "I conclude that they"—the OLG—"put profits ahead of public service. I think there was a point, a crossroads, in" the year "2002"—

The Deputy Speaker: Response.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The leader of the official opposition should look to members on his left and members

on his right who were there at the time, who chose to look the other way—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Tory: Well, my supplementary question is for the Premier, and I would say to the minister, he'll have plenty of chances to answer questions when he comes to the committee on estimates, and he'll have a lot of chances to ask questions when he's over here about the end of October.

Now to the Premier: You obviously have some reason to stonewall. You have something to cover up. You have some piece of information that you're trying to hide. The estimates process—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I need to hear the question, please. Leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Tory: Premier, we asked about whether you would appear to discuss your estimates, not whether the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal would appear to discuss his, and it would be appreciated if you could get up and answer the question as to whether you will appear to discuss the estimates of your office. If you don't, then it's obvious you must have something to hide, something that you don't want to talk about or some piece of information that you want to keep hidden because, as you well know, the estimates are one important part of the process where the executive is to be held accountable by the Legislature for spending. Why won't you show some leadership, why won't you give some meaning to the words you spoke about empowering committees and agree to appear in front of the estimates committee to discuss your estimates?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I certainly thank the member for agreeing in advance that I will be here subsequent to October 10, but I won't do him the same courtesy, because I know my colleague from Don Valley West is going to make sure that Mr. Tory is a footnote in history.

The facts are these: That 6,557 ticket-checking devices have already been implemented as of April 2007; in fact, by the end of June, some 8,800 should be in place. All lottery terminals selling online products have customer-facing video screens—currently 8,871. Screen displays have been enhanced beginning in March 2007. Font size was increased for all validation messaging for both winners and all non-winners. In fact, in January, a 29-second audio and video display is produced on a screen for validation of wins over \$10,000. Also, currently there is a sign posted at each location reminding people to sign the backs of their tickets as part of the silent seller display on the retail—

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The Deputy Speaker: Final supplementary?

Mr. Tory: Here is the record of weak leadership that we're seeing on display today. The Premier will not answer questions in this House about the lottery scandal.

He orders his people to shut down the attempt to refer the lottery scandal to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, and now he is refusing to answer to a committee of the Legislature for his own estimates.

This is the same Premier who once talked about transparency and accountability, and the best he can do is to refer these questions to someone else. It's very clear that Dalton McGuinty hasn't changed the Premier's office; the Premier's office has changed Dalton McGuinty.

The people of Ontario want some accountability. The Premier won't even offer to be accountable for the millions of dollars that his office spends through the estimates process. My question to the Premier is this: Why won't you appear in front of the estimates committee? Why won't you hold yourself accountable, as you said you would, and make a change to the process, as you said that you would, and get to the bottom of this rip-off of innocent people across this province that happened on your watch?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, I quite look forward to presenting the information to the committee when asked. I look forward to placing questions to Mr. Hudak and to Mr. Sterling about what they knew and when they knew it and why they didn't act. As the Ombudsman has indicated, the crossroads was in 2002. The answer may be, in part, that an Ian Urquhart column back in 1999 indicated that Ron Barbaro was brought in to run the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. as a business. This was the mindset of the previous Conservative government. These are the people they brought in. This is the culture that they developed and nurtured. These are the changes that need to be made. No Ontarian should doubt that I, as minister, will get to the bottom of the matter, and then we'll take the quick and decisive actions to ensure that all Ontarians have trust and confidence in their corporation. That stands in stark contrast to this member and his colleagues when they sat in government, when they either sat on their hands and looked the other way or when they simply swept these matters under the rug. Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. New question.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Premier, just one year ago northern Ontario was the home of some of Canada's leading natural resource companies. Decisions about what investments to make and where to focus research and development needed to sustain future jobs were being made right here in Ontario. But under the McGuinty government one year later, first Inco, then Falconbridge and now Algoma Steel have been gobbled up by foreign-based companies who will now make the big decisions outside of Ontario; indeed, outside of Canada.

My question is this: Is the McGuinty government at all concerned about the foreign takeover of three of the leading companies in northern Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): We're always concerned

about any struggling sector or part of our province, and long ago we rolled up our sleeves in an effort to partner with management and with labour in a number of different areas.

I had the opportunity last week to speak to a CAW convention, and after I delivered my remarks, I was approached by CAW members from Thunder Bay. They are very, very concerned about the position taken by the NDP not to proceed with the subway, very concerned about the impact that's going to have on their jobs, their community and their local economy, and they're very eager to hear Mr. Hampton change his mind in that regard. I undertook to put that to him. They want to hear from him. They want to know why he has adopted a position that is harmful to CAW and, in particular, harmful to the economy of Thunder Bay.

Mr. Hampton: I'm not sure where the Premier is, but I know that working people across northern Ontario are very concerned when leading natural resource companies that have been the providers of some of the best-paying jobs have now been taken over by companies that are based halfway around the world. Working Ontarians are concerned about their natural resources, they're concerned about natural resource jobs and they're concerned about where the future decisions are going to be made in terms of research and development and future job development.

Premier, how many other northern Ontario companies have to be taken over or go out of business before the McGuinty government shows some concern about sustaining jobs and sustaining communities in northern Ontario?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Do you know what northerners are concerned about? Northerners want jobs. They want to have some type of certainty. They want to know that this government cares enough about them that jobs are going to be sustained, that jobs are going to grow. Over one year, from March 2006 to March 2007: 18,400 net new jobs in northern Ontario.

Let me tell the leader of the third party that this government will compare its record any time against what they did in northern Ontario between 1990 and 1995.

Mr. Hampton: I say to the McGuinty government, I welcome the comparison. But I can tell you this: The 32,000 people who are out of work—direct and indirect jobs across northern Ontario—are not going to be happy about your answer or this government's inaction.

Here's the reality, Minister: The decisions about future investment in research and development, whether it be in the steel industry in northern Ontario or whether it be in the mining industry, are no longer going to be made in northern Ontario. If people want to talk with someone, they'll have to fly to Switzerland or they'll have to fly to Brazil or they'll have to fly to India.

Let me tell you, when the price of steel starts to decline—and it's a market that goes up and down—or when the price of nickel or copper starts to decline, those decisions will be made elsewhere. I simply say, what is it going to take for the McGuinty government—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: Here's the record that we're going to be comparing ourselves against. Between 1990 and 1995, an average of 1,000 people a week joined the ranks of the unemployed when the NDP were in power; 5,513 jobs were lost in the north under the NDP. When the leader of the third party and the member from Nickel Belt were in cabinet, the number of people in northwestern Ontario employed in the natural resources sector collapsed from 11,700 to 6,000. In northeastern Ontario, the number of people in the natural resources sector plummeted from 27,700 to 21,700. I will compare our record on job creation and prosperity in northern Ontario against their record any time.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Premier: 110 workers at the Buchanan Forest Products sawmill in Hudson, near Sioux Lookout, have learned this week that they are losing their jobs. Effective April 28, 110 workers will be laid off. The company is clear: This is a direct result of the softwood lumber deal. That was the softwood lumber deal put forward by the Harper government and supported by the McGuinty government.

Premier, my question is this: Do you still think your government's support for the Harper government's softwood lumber deal with the United States was good for working families in northern Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): The leader of the third party conveniently likes to ignore all the economic indicators in North America. He knows as well as every member in this House that there has been a total collapse of the US housing market, thereby severely lessening the demand for softwood lumber from this country. That's what's happening. Our mills are having to adjust to that. Just like he talked about in his previous question, lumber is a commodity like minerals, and the demand and the prices go up and down in a cycle just like they do in minerals, as accepted in the first question. So it's accepted in this question, too, that lumber is the very same, but we have a \$1-billion transition fund to help our industry try to get through this cycle.

Mr. Hampton: It was the McGuinty government that said that the US softwood lumber deal proposed by the Harper government was going to be a good deal. It was you, the Minister of Natural Resources, who said this was going to sustain softwood lumber jobs in northern On-

tario. Well, Tembec sawmill in Timmins, 130 jobs gone; Domtar sawmill in White River, 250 jobs gone; Domtar sawmill in Nairn Centre, 140 jobs gone; now 110 jobs at the sawmill in Hudson.

Premier, industry leaders warned you about the softwood lumber deal, community leaders warned you, union leaders warned you. They said the softwood lumber deal is not going to be a good deal. Premier, do you still think your support for the Harper government's softwood lumber deal was a good deal for working families in the forest industry in northern Ontario?

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Hon. Mr. Ramsay: What the member refuses to recognize is how competitive a jurisdiction Ontario is, compared to the other provinces, because of the changes that the McGuinty government made to the forest sector. By supporting forest inventory and the forest roads, we're in a position now where companies from across the country want to do business in Ontario.

The proof of that is in the export levels that are happening out of Ontario. Where Quebec is exporting about 50% of what they could, Ontario is exporting 95% of what Ontario could, under the quota system. That shows that we're at almost full capacity in what we could be doing. We're the most competitive jurisdiction in this country, and we're very proud of those commitments we've made to the industry, and the industry is very pleased with the commitments we've made to them.

Mr. Hampton: I was in northeastern Ontario not long ago, and what people are concerned about there is in fact the exporting of raw logs out of northeastern Ontario under the McGuinty government to mills in Quebec, where they're being processed and where the jobs are.

Premier, this is about your government. This is about 32,000 good-paying forest sector jobs that have been destroyed under the McGuinty government. In some cases, it has been your policy of driving hydro rates through the roof that has closed paper mills and has shut down sawmills. In other communities, it has been your support for the softwood lumber deal, which is turning out to be a disaster for sawmills across the north. In Ignace, 60 jobs gone, and the company was very direct: This is a direct result of the softwood lumber deal. That's a town that's completely dependent upon its sawmill.

Premier, I want to ask you this simple question: How could the McGuinty government abandon all of these working families who are involved in the forest sector across northern Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: It's too bad the leader of the third party doesn't like to talk about some of the good success stories that we've had. In contrast to your very first question, when we had a multinational walk away from a pulp and paper company in northern Ontario, at Terrace Bay, Buchanan Forest Products came to the government and said, "We'd like to work with you and get this plant up and running again." We have that; we have a really good story. We're going to be going there again this week and helping them with biofuel boilers and making sure they have even greater efficiency than they do today.

These are good stories that you like to ignore because we're working with the companies. In Cascades and some of these, we're going to come back too. We're working to make sure we have an indigenous-based industry. We're working with the companies and making sure we get that sector back on again.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): My question is for the Premier. I'm hoping the Premier will have the intestinal fortitude to actually answer a question about his own office. Premier, you've dodged our questions in this House. You've ducked our attempts to have an inquiry into the lottery scandal conducted by the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. Now you're ducking and dodging our call to have you appear before the estimates committee to answer for your attempts to cover up the lottery scandal and to answer for your own ministry. What are you afraid of, Premier? What are you hiding? Why can't you show the respect and leadership people expect from their Premier and appear before the estimates committee, as you were asked by members of this House?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I would say to the member that I understand the partisan political perspectives of members opposite, indeed of all members of this House. But an independent, unbiased officer of the Legislature, Mr. André Marin, the Ombudsman, said just this past weekend, on CH television, "I'm pleased with the recommendations that were accepted. I think the recommendations are very substantial." Key to them: screening of retailers, the secret shopping scheme he recommended, the policing of retailers by an outside agency, a new adjudicative agency to decide who gets the award when it's in dispute.

"These are radical changes, and I'm happy with the government's response. The government chose to forward it to the OPP; it's not a recommendation I made."

The point is, many of these things could have been done under a previous government when this member sat in the cabinet. Regrettably, this member and members of his caucus decided to sweep these matters under the rug and not take their responsibility seriously, but the folks on this side of the House today certainly do. We've gotten to the bottom of the matter and we're acting decisively to protect—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Wilson: Premier, your minion here talks about taking responsibility seriously. It's an absolute—

The Deputy Speaker: I've asked members to use temperate language. I think we're getting near the edge

of that, and I ask the members to reconsider what they're saying and how.

Mr. Wilson: It is rude and it is disgraceful that the Premier would not answer questions about his own ministry. It's not only a requirement of this House and of our democracy; it's something that he said he would do during the last election campaign: He would promote members, he would promote committees and he would be held accountable for his role as Premier of this province should he be elected Premier. I guess that was something very nice to say to the electorate—say anything to get elected.

I ask you today, what makes you so high and mighty that you won't do what every other minister is required to do in this Legislative Assembly, and that is to appear and be accountable before the estimates committee for your—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I have twice appeared before the estimates committee, and I look forward to another engagement to answer questions from all parties in the Legislature. But I guess the question for the member opposite is, when he was sitting at the cabinet table, if he was so serious about these matters, why did he and his House leader and his colleagues not allow the standing committee on government agencies to call one government agency in eight years—not one? This government, on the other hand, in four years will have six government agencies called for review by an all-party committee, in fact chaired by a member of your caucus, to sit and ask questions and to make recommendations about the way those agencies run. I think that stands in stark contrast—in fact, I know that the Ombudsman comments quite specifically, where he commends me as the minister and commends the government for our openness and responsiveness, because it is in stark contrast to the way things have been done previously. The Ombudsman does note that there was a crossroads in 2002, but this member and members of his caucus and members of the cabinet chose to look the other way, chose to—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Last week the joint hospital laundry facility in North Bay announced it is closing. Sixteen jobs in laundry services will be cut and another 10 jobs may be transferred out of the city. All of the laundry will now be shipped over 130 kilometres away, at considerable environmental and financial cost. My question is this: Is this what happens under the McGuinty government's private, profit-driven hospital scheme—the cost of the hospital deal goes from \$200 million to \$500 million to \$1 billion, and the hospital laundry workers lose their jobs in order to pay for the private company's profits?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): If the honourable member cared to pay attention to it, he would know very clearly that North Bay General Hospital, associated with dramatic enhancements to their funding, most certainly has more people employed today than when our government came to office, providing important health care services to the people of that area.

We are very proud indeed that our member, Monique Smith, has been able to build hospitals in that community that Mike Harris couldn't deliver for that community. But the issue with respect to the laundry is most assuredly a decision that the local hospital board took. They saw it as an opportunity to piggyback on the capacity for laundry services that's there in the Sudbury community and they made this decision purely as a local part of decision-making processes.

Mr. Hampton: For the McGuinty government, shipping laundry some 300 kilometres back and forth may make sense for you, but I can tell you, for the people of North Bay, watching the laundry go 160 kilometres down the highway one way and then come 160 kilometres back doesn't make sense, and workers and community leaders have told you that. But it's clear the McGuinty government isn't listening.

My question again is this: Premier, how many other North Bay hospital services will be cut or consolidated somewhere else? How many hospital worker jobs will be cut or privatized under the McGuinty government's private, profit-driven hospital scheme, which has already driven up the cost of the hospital at least \$500 million?

1520

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: It's passing fancy that today the honourable member is concerned about some trips back and forth from North Bay to Sudbury, but he's not concerned whatsoever about the decisions he's taken to cut 35 million rides by transit users of a long-promised and long-supported subway line here in York.

Where was the honourable member when his party saw ancillary services contracted out at St. Thomas Elgin General, at Trillium Health Centre, at Halton Healthcare, at Joe Brant Memorial, all under his watch? Where was that honourable member when two years in a row they massively cut the budgets of all hospitals in the province of Ontario? Where was he then? Silence.

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North): My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Minister, last week, rumours were swirling around Thunder Bay that the Registrar General's office was about to close its call centre in the city, with the 30 jobs involved being relocated to Toronto. Obviously, such a possibility was of great concern to me and my colleague Bill Mauro, as our region has already suffered significant job losses in the forestry sector and any further job losses struck us as unacceptable.

After speaking with you about this issue, I was grateful to learn that the call centre is not closing, that there are no job losses as a result of any reconfiguration of the office and that indeed we have seen, and will continue to see, employment increases at the ORG office in my community.

Having said that, there continues to be some confusion as to the status of the provincial office in Thunder Bay that I believe requires absolute clarity. Minister, can you inform me, my constituents and the members of the House as to what exactly is the situation with the ORG operation in Thunder Bay?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I do want to share with my colleagues from Thunder Bay that the call centre is not closing. We are actually going to be adding staff. It's an outstanding office, I might say to all of the people watching this. The member will know that actually we've added 102 permanent full-time jobs. Now, 80 of those were part-time temporary jobs, but another 22 are incremental jobs.

What we are doing at this outstanding office is we are moving production from our Toronto office to Thunder Bay. We are moving our premium service from Toronto to Thunder Bay. Now, there will be several people in Toronto who are employed at our Registrar General office that will be doing calls that are currently handled in Thunder Bay. At net-net, we are adding jobs to Thunder Bay. This is, I might say, an outstanding office doing great work for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Gravelle: Minister, thank you very much. Clearly, this is a good-news story for employment opportunities in Thunder Bay, and obviously I am relieved that the rumours of the job losses have proven to be completely unfounded.

In your initial response, though, Minister, you made reference to new services that will be provided by the ORG in Thunder Bay, and new jobs. Are you in a position to provide any specific details as to what this will involve and, perhaps more significantly, will this mean further job opportunities for our constituents?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: The two things that we are adding to Thunder Bay: the production of birth certificates, the part that is done currently in Toronto, will be moving there; and what we call the premium service.

I would just say to the Legislature, if you remember, 18 months ago all birth certificate applications were by paper and that office said, "We can do this online. Furthermore, Minister, if you do it online, we can guarantee that if we don't have it delivered in 15 business days, it's free."

I want to tell the people of Ontario and the Legislature, we had zero online applications 18 months ago. Since then, we've had 400,000 applications and 128 refunds. I always say, Pizza Pizza can't do that. We've had terrific service. Our employees at Thunder Bay are an example and we're going to continue to build on that centre of excellence, delivering great quality to the people of Ontario.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I have a question for the Premier, and hopefully he will respond to it. What we're seeing here today is unique—I think shamefully unique. We're asking the Premier questions about his estimates, how he's going to deal with his estimates, his office's estimates, and he's referring it to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Anyone viewing the proceedings today should be wondering why the Premier will not deal with questions about his office and the conduct of officials in his office. I ask him once again, will he appear before the estimates committee to justify the expenditures in his office?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): As I have indicated, I have twice attended the estimates committee, and I look forward to attending once again. This member, with all of the phony outrage and fake bluff and bluster, knows quite well that when he was a member of the crown, I believe Premier Harris was called three times before the estimates committee and did not appear once. I think anybody who is watching at home understands the source that this is coming from. It is phony outrage. It is completely fake. The member opposite well knows that the Premier has not attended the estimates committee, which was the case under your government. If you would come clean and just be clear with Ontarians that I have been to the estimates committee, that I will be at the estimates committee and that I have answered every question that has been posed in this House and will continue to do so, because it is this government that decided to get to the bottom of these matters, to roll up our sleeves and to deal with it, unlike yourself, sir, who swept—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The answer's been given. Supplementary.

Mr. Runciman: I suspect that any former Premier in this place had the intestinal fortitude, the courage and the leadership to stand up and answer questions about estimates dealing with the Premier's office, not a referral to a minister who has nothing whatsoever to do with the estimates of the Premier's office—nothing whatsoever.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, turn it down a notch, please. Thank you.

Mr. Runciman: This is a significant abuse of the rules of the House in my view—a significant abuse. I ask the Premier once again a very clear-cut question: Estimates for your office are coming before the estimates committee in the next week or two. Will you appear to justify the expenditures in your office?

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: My colleague says that's simply a cheap stunt. I wouldn't go that far. I recall previously in

the House when we couldn't get ministers or a Premier to even attend question period in this House. Of course this government has introduced legislation requiring the attendance of the Premier, of the cabinet, here in the House, to answer questions daily that are posed by the members of the official opposition.

This member in fact was the chair of the executive council, the chair of cabinet. In that eight-year period when they were the government, they did not call one government agency in front of the standing committee on government agencies. That is a glaring omission. The record under this government: In four years, six agencies will have been called for members of all parties to review, to make recommendations and to get a response. I'll stack the record of this administration compared to this member and his colleagues any day of the week and twice on Sunday.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): To the Minister of Education: From 2003 to 2006, 159 schools in Ontario were closed. Some of these schools are being closed and sold to cover board deficits. The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board recently decided to completely disrupt the programming of over 500 students in two schools—Bayview and R. B. Curry—to leave the more valuable Bayview property available for sale. The parents of R. B. Curry, constituents of the Premier, are losing their school despite having a vibrant program for over 232 students. Minister, what happened to keeping good schools open?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I'm happy to respond to the member opposite. I really believe in the institution of school boards. I believe in their ability to have a plan for their communities. The reason school boards are important is that they know about their communities.

1530

We're also dealing right now with declining enrolment across the province. We have got to give school boards the ability to plan in that environment of declining enrolment. We froze school closures for two years; we put a moratorium on. We brought out a series of guidelines. We've asked boards to consider the value of programs to the community, to the students, to look at the services that are delivered in a school community, because we know that schools are worth more than just the bricks and mortar; they are hubs for communities. We've asked school boards to look at those factors.

But at the end of the day, school boards have to be able to plan. They have to be able to meet the needs of the students who are in the system as opposed to students who are not.

Mr. Marchese: Thank God we had a moratorium on school closures. By the way, I'm a bit displeased, because the Premier is losing a school despite having a vibrant program for over 232 students. I'm glad the board has a plan, because the plan I described isn't working.

You can't put school boards in a position of having to close schools to make up for a lack of funding and then wash your hands of the responsibility by appointing a review, which is what you did. You promised to keep good schools open, not to review them. Minister, when did "keep good schools open" become "displace, divide and disperse"?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: Just off the top, let's remember that under the government of that member, 155 schools closed across the province. Under the NDP, 155 schools closed.

Since we've been in office, we have put into the funding formula a supported schools grant that helps boards keep isolated schools open. We have put funding into the funding formula for small schools, to guarantee that those small schools have a principal and a secretary. So we have given boards extra resources to keep schools open.

But boards have to be able to do their planning. We need to have school trustees in communities who know what the needs of their communities are, and those school trustees have to have the authority to make their plans, consolidate programs and provide the programs that their students need. That is why I look forward to continuing to work with the Ottawa board and with boards across the province as they put their plans in place.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is directed to the Attorney General. The McGuinty government has been a champion in advocating for the rights of 1.5 million Ontarians who live with disabilities. I understand that the federal government recently announced that it will add its signature to a landmark United Nations treaty on protecting the rights of people with disabilities and that Canada will join 53 other nations to endorse the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Minister, on this, the 25th anniversary of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, could you explain the importance of this convention and indicate to the Legislature if the government of Ontario will support this initiative?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): Absolutely, the answer is yes. On March 14, I was very pleased to write the Minister of Foreign Affairs and express Ontario's support for Canada's intention to sign the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The convention seeks to promote the fundamental rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities through progressive implementation of measures to ensure their dignity and full participation in society. The broad objectives of the convention are consistent with the goals of the McGuinty government and the policies and measures that we've taken to protect and enhance the rights and lives of persons with disabilities.

As Ontario will be required to implement some of the convention's terms, we've asked for assurances from the

federal government that we be consulted, as all provinces ought to be consulted. I also expressed Ontario's support in a conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs last month and look forward to updates from Parliament in this regard.

Mrs. Van Bommel: Minister, I'm very pleased to hear that we will be supporting the convention.

I also understand that you and Chief Justice McMurtry recently announced that a new Ontario courts accessibility committee has been established to help promote barrier-free courts in Ontario and to better respond to the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities. Minister, could you explain what steps the Ministry of the Attorney General is taking to improve the accessibility of Ontario's court system?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I thank the member for her question. On April 2, the McGuinty government announced that we were acting on recommendations from a report presented by Chief Justice McMurtry to the Ministry of the Attorney General on how to make Ontario's court system fully accessible. The committee comprised representatives of the judiciary, the bar, the Ministry of the Attorney General and the province's accessibility directorate. It will be co-chaired by Justice Susan Lang of the Court of Appeal and the assistant Deputy Attorney General, court services division.

In addition, a pilot project has designated a site accessibility information coordinator for each of seven court locations: one each in Brockville, Hamilton, London, Newmarket, Toronto, Sudbury and Thunder Bay. The coordinators are providing information on existing services that are available, tracking information requests and the steps taken to meet these requests. The data will help the ministry to assess accessibility needs to further expand the service in the future.

I want to thank Chief Justice McMurtry for his tremendous dedication and commitment on this and many, many other issues and look forward to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Premier. Repeatedly today you have been asked—and you have not even addressed the question; you have referred it to your minister. It's a very simple and not unusual question: Will you, as you claimed to be placing so much importance upon the work of committees in this legislative body during your campaign stumping speech in 2003, appear before the estimates committee so that you can be asked questions about the expenses arising out of your office? It's a simple question, Premier. Please don't refer it. Please answer this question: Will you appear before the estimates committee so that your expenses can be reviewed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): No, I won't. Just so they

hear it again: No, I will not. I'll follow the precedent set by Premier Harris. He was asked on three separate occasions if he might appear.

I can say proudly, though, that we have reduced the budget of the Premier's office by \$150,000 from the days of the Conservative government. I can also say that our cabinet office budget has been reduced by \$2.3 million since the Conservative days. So we're being very careful with the people's money.

Mr. Yakabuski: At least we have an answer, but it's very disappointing, Premier.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): No surprise.

Mr. Yakabuski: Not surprising, but disappointing.

First of all, you refuse and you crush the ability of this Legislature to bring this whole issue before a legislative committee. Now you are asked to please appear yourself so that you can answer questions on your own estimates and expenses arising out of your office with regard to this issue for this House, and you steadfastly say no.

Premier, what is left for us to determine your role and that of the people in your office with regard to this scandal?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The members opposite have lost all faith in the Ombudsman and his ability to deal with these kinds of issues. They, furthermore, entirely discounted the ability of the Ontario Provincial Police to deal with these kinds of issues. It's in their interests to continue to play games with this, and I understand that. But I think what Ontarians want us to do, and we hear them loudly and clearly, is all those things that are necessary to restore their confidence in the integrity of their lottery system.

The Ombudsman has looked at this. He has given us a number of specific recommendations. KPMG has laid out a number of additional recommendations. We have turned this matter, beyond that, over to the Ontario Provincial Police. There are a number of changes that have already been made that are manifest at the lottery terminals themselves today in Ontario. We will continue to do everything we need to do to ensure that we keep our sleeves rolled up. We don't try to brush things under the carpet, as was done by the previous government. We will move forward to improve the quality of the services provided by the Ontario lottery and gaming system.

1540

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Premier, it's official: Genfast Manufacturing Co. in Brantford threw 210 people out of work today. The sudden Genfast closure is yet another example of the way tens upon tens of thousands of workers are being thrown on the scrap heap in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. One is of them is a gentleman named Alex MacPhearson, of Hamilton Mountain. At 64, after 25 years of service and just 10 days to go until early retirement, he was cut off his benefits despite the fact that he has three years of terminal

cancer. He has stomach, lung and throat cancer and no compensation whatsoever.

Premier, where do you suggest that Mr. MacPhearson turn for some help with this inhumane situation that he now finds himself in?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Let me first say that we are tremendously concerned any time that anybody in the province of Ontario loses their job, whether it's Mr. MacPhearson in his very trying circumstances or other workers as well.

I know that the NDP are exceptionally negative when it comes to their outlook on our economy, but the truth bears repetition that since the past three and a half years, we are now ahead by 340,000 net new jobs. The unemployment rate is at its lowest level in five years.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business recently announced that there are 70,000 job vacancies right now in the province of Ontario, mostly in the skilled trades. That's why we're expanding the number of people enrolled in our apprenticeship programs by up to 7,000 more on an annual basis. That's why we've created room for 86,000 more young people in our colleges and universities to invest in them, so that they continue to take advantage of all these new opportunities that are appearing in this economy.

Ms. Horwath: Premier, no severance, no termination pay, no job benefits or no job and no benefits: Is that your idea of success in this province? When manufacturing plants are falling like dominoes in McGuinty's Ontario, you have no plan to help hard-working and loyal, long-service employees like Alex MacPhearson. Alex's next cancer appointment is May 17, and without benefits, he won't be able to afford his cancer medications without having to beg for charity. Will you embark on a personal undertaking to ensure that Alex MacPhearson is covered for his cancer drugs and can live out his life in dignity? And will you finally acknowledge that your failure to protect good manufacturing jobs in this province is creating massive hardship for hard-working Ontario families?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I'm proud of the record that, when communities have experienced job losses, our Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is very quickly there to reach out to work with those communities and with those affected employers.

As well, it's important to understand that the Employment Standards Act does protect employees in this province. After three months of employment, an employee is entitled to notice-of-termination pay or notice in lieu if the employer ends that employment. An employee may also qualify for severance pay after five years of service. Severance pay is intended to compensate the employee for loss of seniority and job-related benefits and recognizes long service.

There is something the honourable member could do, and that would be to pick up the phone and call her colleague Mr. Layton in Ottawa. One of the things we

need to see proclaimed is Bill C-55, which would better protect workers in the province of Ontario from those companies that have gone bankrupt. I would encourage the honourable member to pick up the phone, call Jack Layton and help us out in that regard.

TFO

M^{me} Monique Smith (Nipissing): Ma question s'adresse à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Elle est au sujet de TFO.

En 1986, lors de la création de ce qu'on appelait à l'époque La Chaîne française, tout le monde n'était pas convaincu qu'il y avait de la place en Ontario pour une chaîne à temps plein, à 100 % française; qu'une telle initiative était viable.

Regardez maintenant l'essor que connaît cette petite chaîne. TFO est devenue pour la francophonie ontarienne une institution fondamentale et un outil de développement indispensable. C'est avec un immense plaisir que la communauté francophone a accueilli un TFO indépendant le 1^{er} avril 2007, autonomie accordée par le gouvernement McGuinty. Qu'est-ce que cela représente pour la communauté francophone de l'Ontario?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Je voudrais remercier la députée de Nipissing pour l'intérêt qu'elle porte à la communauté francophone, parce qu'elle représente une grande communauté francophone.

La chaîne TFO sera dotée de son conseil d'administration et sera gérée de façon autonome à la fois sur les plans administratif et budgétaire. Elle a son propre conseil d'administration, ses propres gestionnaires et son propre budget.

Nous avons d'ailleurs alloué une subvention ponctuelle de 15,4 \$ millions pour soutenir les coûts de transition, de réinstallation et de démarrage, de même que les coûts de conversion au numérique. Nous continuons à allouer une subvention annuelle d'environ 15 \$ millions pour veiller à ce que TFO réponde aux besoins culturels et éducatifs spécifiques de la communauté francophone et remplisse son mandat en matière de télédiffusion et de communication.

La communauté franco-ontarienne nous demandait depuis longtemps que TFO devienne autonome, avec son propre conseil d'administration, et nous avons livré la marchandise.

M^{me} Smith: C'était demandé depuis longtemps; c'est vrai.

Nous entendons tous que TFO, par son action innovatrice, parle à l'intelligence, suscite la réflexion, éveille l'intérêt, interpelle l'imagination et nourrit le sentiment d'appartenance à la francophonie d'ici et du monde. Cette autonomie revêt un caractère extrêmement significatif, car elle va permettre à TFO d'élargir ses horizons et d'aspirer à un brillant avenir. Quelles sont vos aspirations quant à la nouvelle autonomie de TFO?

L'hon. M^{me} Meilleur: J'espère que TFO va continuer à grandir, à se développer et même à se dépasser. J'espère que TFO va continuer à nous informer sur l'actualité entourant nos villes et nos villages, nos institutions, nos artistes, nos hommes et nos femmes qui à chaque jour écrivent une nouvelle page de notre histoire.

J'espère que TFO va continuer à nous raconter l'histoire des Franco-Ontariens, ses luttes et ses victoires, qu'elle va continuer à développer des partenariats avec les francophones d'ici et d'ailleurs.

J'espère que TFO soit à la hauteur des ambitions de l'Ontario français et qu'elle continue à nous donner une voix. TFO est un instrument de dialogue que nous pouvons engager entre nous, avec d'autres communautés francophones au Canada et avec la francophonie internationale. En ce sens, elle est une véritable pierre angulaire de la vitalité francophone en Ontario. L'autonomie de TFO va grandement renforcer les fondements institutionnels de l'Ontario français.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Premier. You made a 2003 election promise to build a strategy for seniors that would guarantee that our seniors would be treated with dignity and respect. However, you have failed to do so. Today, about 50% of the long-term-care residents—that's about 35,000 people—still live in older homes that are not wheelchair accessible. They have three- and four-bed wards and they don't have ensuite baths. In fact, they're only meeting the design standards from 1972, as opposed to 1998.

I am asking you today, Premier, to commit to a capital renewal plan in order that these vulnerable older people can live with dignity and respect and be accommodated in homes that have rooms where they are private or semi-private, where they have ensuite baths and are totally wheelchair accessible. Will you commit today to a capital renewal plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): We all look forward with great intrigue and fascination to whether the Conservative Party will actually develop policy for the coming election around health care, and most especially how they will rationalize their daily requests for greater resource with their commitment to cut health care funding by \$2.6 billion. For our part, with respect to long-term care, we're very proud that, even before this fiscal year, we had invested 740 million new dollars in long-term care. We have a bill that will soon be called for, I hope, third reading in this House that will enhance the protections that are available for our residents in long-term care.

We most certainly do agree that across the province of Ontario there are a number of homes which require upgrade. We're working very, very carefully within our ministry to develop an appropriate program that would

see especially those smaller homes among C and Ds appropriately redeveloped. We are very concerned that if we follow the pattern established by my honourable friend when she was a minister, the homes in rural Ontario—some 50 or 60 beds—would all disappear. That has been their strategy in the past.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to do with funding at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas demand for health services are expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas studies indicate that overcrowded emergency rooms result in higher mortality rates; and

"Whereas growing demand and lack of availability of long-term-care beds places increased pressure on acute care beds; and

"Whereas the operating budget for MAHC must reflect the growing demand for services in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services for the people of Muskoka-East Parry Sound and allocate more long-term-care beds for Muskoka-East Parry Sound."

I support this petition.

1550

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I've got a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, "Regulate Zoos to Protect Animals and Communities." It reads:

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I agree with this petition, and I'll sign it.

ENDANGERED SPECIES LEGISLATION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I have a petition for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government tabled the Endangered Species Act, 2007; and

“Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources posted the legislation on the Environmental Registry for public comment; and

“Whereas there has been no face-to-face consultation with the people who will be affected most by this legislation; and

“Whereas the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007, could significantly affect municipalities, private property owners and economic development across the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Forestry Coalition, the Ontario Forest Industries Association and many other groups have asked the McGuinty government to hold public consultations before passing this legislation; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government previously promised to hold consultation where legislation could have a significant impact on the public; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is virtually bankrupt and unable to fulfill its role and responsibilities as required by the Endangered Species Act, 2007;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government hold public consultations across the province to provide the public with an opportunity to express their concerns with the Endangered Species Act, 2007, and that the McGuinty government provide dedicated funding for all aspects of the legislation’s implementation.”

I support this petition as it’s signed by many people from my riding, and I send it down to the table with Jacob.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it is about regulation of zoos to protect animals and communities. I’m pleased to support my colleague the member from Willowdale and to read it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas those same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature in support of this and to ask page Cody to carry it for me.

ONTARIO LOTTERY
AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that people continue to come into my office to sign because of their great concern on what’s been going on at the lottery corporation.

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario’s lottery system for months, if not years;

“Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to ‘spin the scandal’ rather than fix the problems;

“Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system.”

I affix my signature as I agree with this petition.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a few petitions today.

“Regulate Zoos to Protect Animals and Communities

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I agree with these two petitions and will affix my signature to them.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): This petition is to the Parliament of Ontario, of course. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

As the proud proponent of that bill, I'm pleased to affix my signature and pass this petition on to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 30(b), it now being 4 p.m., I am now required to call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM
APPROPRIATION ACT, 2007LOI DE 2007 SUR LES MESURES
BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION
ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 10, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 187, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): With respect to Bill 187, pursuant to the order of the House dated April 11, 2007, I am now required to put the question.

On April 2, Mr. Sorbara moved second reading of Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members—no, I apologize. We're going to be doing something a little differently. We're going to go to the next vote now, with regard to the order of the House.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM
REFERENDUM ACT, 2007LOI DE 2007 SUR LE RÉFÉRENDUM
RELATIF AU SYSTÈME ÉLECTORAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 10, 2007, on the motion for third reading of Bill 155, An Act to provide for a referendum on Ontario's electoral system / Projet de loi 155, Loi prévoyant un référendum sur le système électoral de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): With respect to Bill 155, pursuant to the order of the House dated April 16, 2007, I'm now required to put the question.

Mrs. Bountrogianni has moved third reading of Bill 155, An Act to provide for a referendum on Ontario's electoral system. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members now. This will be a 10-minute bell. We will first vote on Bill 187 and then vote on Bill 155 after that.

The division bells rang from 1600 to 1610.

BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM
APPROPRIATION ACT, 2007LOI DE 2007 SUR LES MESURES
BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION
ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Sorbara has moved second reading of Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gravelle, Michael	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Sergio, Mario
Chan, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	McGuinty, Dalton	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
 Chudleigh, Ted
 DiNovo, Cheri
 Dunlop, Garfield
 Elliott, Christine
 Ferreira, Paul
 Hardeman, Ernie
 Horwath, Andrea
 Hudak, Tim
 Klees, Frank

Kormos, Peter
 Marchese, Rosario
 Martiniuk, Gerry
 Miller, Norm
 Munro, Julia
 Murdoch, Bill
 O'Toole, John
 Prue, Michael
 Runciman, Robert W.
 Savoline, Joyce

Scott, Laurie
 Sterling, Norman W.
 Tabuns, Peter
 Tascona, Joseph N.
 Tory, John
 Wilson, Jim
 Witmer, Elizabeth
 Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
 The ayes are 55; the nays are 28.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 11, the bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. We will now open the doors for 30 seconds.

**ELECTORAL SYSTEM
 REFERENDUM ACT, 2007**

**LOI DE 2007 SUR LE RÉFÉRENDUM
 RELATIF AU SYSTÈME ÉLECTORAL**

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mrs. Bountrogianni has moved third reading of Bill 155, An Act to provide for a referendum on Ontario's electoral system.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick
 Bentley, Christopher
 Bountrogianni, Marie
 Bradley, James J.
 Broten, Laurel C.
 Brownell, Jim
 Bryant, Michael
 Cansfield, Donna H.
 Caplan, David
 Chambers, Mary Anne V.
 Chan, Michael
 Colle, Mike
 Crozier, Bruce
 Delaney, Bob
 Di Cocco, Caroline
 Dombrowsky, Leona
 Duguid, Brad
 Duncan, Dwight
 Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Fonseca, Peter
 Gerretsen, John
 Gravelle, Michael
 Jeffrey, Linda
 Kular, Kuldip
 Kwinter, Monte
 Lalonde, Jean-Marc
 Leal, Jeff
 Marsales, Judy
 Matthews, Deborah
 Mauro, Bill
 McGuinty, Dalton
 McMeekin, Ted
 Meilleur, Madeleine
 Milloy, John
 Mitchell, Carol
 Mossop, Jennifer F.
 Oraziotti, David
 Patten, Richard

Peters, Steve
 Phillips, Gerry
 Qaadri, Shafiq
 Racco, Mario G.
 Ramal, Khalil
 Ramsay, David
 Rinaldi, Lou
 Ruprecht, Tony
 Sandals, Liz
 Sergio, Mario
 Smith, Monique
 Smitherman, George
 Takhar, Harinder S.
 Van Bommel, Maria
 Watson, Jim
 Wynne, Kathleen O.
 Zimmer, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
 Chudleigh, Ted
 DiNovo, Cheri
 Dunlop, Garfield
 Elliott, Christine
 Ferreira, Paul
 Hardeman, Ernie
 Horwath, Andrea
 Hudak, Tim
 Klees, Frank

Kormos, Peter
 Marchese, Rosario
 Martiniuk, Gerry
 Miller, Norm
 Munro, Julia
 Murdoch, Bill
 O'Toole, John
 Prue, Michael
 Runciman, Robert W.
 Savoline, Joyce

Scott, Laurie
 Sterling, Norman W.
 Tabuns, Peter
 Tascona, Joseph N.
 Tory, John
 Wilson, Jim
 Witmer, Elizabeth
 Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
 The ayes are 55; the nays are 28.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

**SAFEGUARDING AND SUSTAINING
 ONTARIO'S WATER ACT, 2007**

**LOI DE 2007 SUR LA SAUVEGARDE ET LA
 DURABILITÉ DES EAUX DE L'ONTARIO**

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 12, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 198, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario's water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act / Projet de loi 198, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario afin d'assurer la sauvegarde et la durabilité des eaux de l'Ontario, à apporter des modifications connexes à la Loi de 2002 sur la salubrité de l'eau potable et à abroger la Loi sur le contrôle des transferts d'eau.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this item, the member for Scarborough Southwest had the floor. I will now call for further debate on the bill.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brook): I'm pleased to stand today and debate Bill 198, Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act, 2007. I'm pleased to share part of my time today with the member from Simcoe North for the debate. I appreciate the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka speaking to Bill 198 last Thursday for me.

The first amendment to the Ontario Water Resources Act is to add a purpose, which states: "The purpose of this act is to provide for the conservation, protection and management of Ontario's waters and for their efficient and sustainable use, in order to promote Ontario's long-term environmental, social and economic well-being."

I think we would all agree that this is a great purpose. We all want to protect our water resources in Ontario. Although stakeholders and those concerned are not quite convinced that this proposed legislation will actually meet its grandly stated objectives, I will certainly be putting some of those points forward in my comments this afternoon.

We all strongly believe that we must work together to protect the most important natural resource we have: our water. However, there are some significant problems with this bill that will not allow for the protection of our water resources as claimed by the current government in this legislation.

Firstly, while proposing to ban diversions out of the basin, this bill still allows for large-scale diversions between individual Great Lakes within the basin. Ontario has three basins, and the Great Lakes are all contained in one basin alone.

Also, despite imposing a new water tax on the taking of water used for industrial or commercial purposes, this bill does not encourage or support the development and practice of water conservation in Ontario. I think conser-

vation is often forgotten by this government, and certainly one of the pillars we should work towards is more conservation.

1620

The fact of the matter is that in 2003, almost four years ago to the day, Dalton McGuinty announced, "We will stop allowing companies to raid our precious water supplies.... We will end this reckless giveaway." That was 2003, almost four years ago. We're now in 2007, with the first implementation of the proposed legislation to take place not until 2009: That's six years away from the 2003 election promise that was made by Dalton McGuinty. Even their own Liberal backgrounder on this bill, handed out in the flashy photo op, says, "This is the first of several steps required...." So we're nearly four years into their mandate and they're finally taking the first steps to protect our precious water resources, which I mentioned was clearly stated as a Dalton McGuinty promise.

This government has had four years, I say again, to put together strong, comprehensive legislation to properly protect our Great Lakes and water resources, but this bill is a very small step. There's a very strong odour of some political motivation, I would say. The bill represents the 11th hour again, the last second, a supposed green attempt for a rollout by the McGuinty government, trying to get the people of Ontario to really believe he is going to do something about the environment.

The Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement, protecting and working to sustain our Great Lakes water resources, is of vital importance to the province of Ontario. The Great Lakes holds nearly one-fifth of the fresh surface water on our planet. But according to the Environmental Commissioner's 2005-06 annual report, by 2001, water levels in three of the five Great Lakes—Lake Superior, Lake Michigan and Lake Huron—had been lower than normal for four years in a row.

According to an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* on April 14, the national chairperson of the Council of Canadians argues that this Liberal government's water strategy is concerning, given growing concerns over water scarcity and the impact of climate change in Canada and worldwide. They also argue that many people forget to mention that most of Canada's water is not renewable. I quote: "[I]n recent years, one-quarter of Canadian municipalities have faced shortages. One-third rely on groundwater to provide for daily needs. Water shortages in the Prairies cost \$5 billion in economic damage in 2001 alone."

Many concerned Ontarians have begun to realize that our abundant water resources might not last forever, especially without a conscious effort by government to show the necessary leadership to protect and conserve them. This bill implements the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement that was signed in December 2005 by Ontario, Quebec and the eight US Great Lake states. Proposed amendments to the Ontario Water Resources Act in this bill include—

sorry for being technical, for those watching at home—section 34.3, which talks to the prohibition of intra-basin transfers, elevating a ban on diversions out of the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River Basin from a regulation to be part of the pact act.

However, Ontario already prohibits the diversion of water out of its three major water basins. It was actually the previous government that implemented the policy which banned the transfer of water out of the basin, and that was there in 1999. The proposed bill simply changes this ban from regulation into statute. That transformation from regulation to statute is important, perhaps, but it's not over the top for this government and this minister to try to pat themselves on the back. It is hardly groundbreaking. We, the previous government, did it in 1999. It was in regulation, but it had been adhered to, so it's not something new that was brought on.

One major problem is that the bill still allows for large-scale water transfers among watersheds within the basin, known as the intra-basin diversions. The proposed amendments to the act prohibit the diversion of water for new or increased intra-basin transfers of 379,000 litres per day or greater from one Great Lakes watershed to another Great Lakes watershed, subject to strictly regulated exceptions.

An exception standard sets out the criteria that must be met by applicants before these proposals will be approved.

In terms of the exception standard, although water taken from the basin must be returned to the basin, as transfers from the basin are prohibited, there are no guidelines in this bill that stipulate the quality of the water that must be returned to the basin. I think this is a very glaring omission, especially from a government that spends so much time touting its so-called leadership on the issue of water quality in Ontario.

Then we go on: Subsection 34.6(3) enshrines in the Ontario Water Resources Act the exception standard, set out in article 201 of the Great Lakes agreement.

The exception standard sets out seven criteria that must be met by applicants for proposals for new or increased transfers from one Great Lakes watershed to another. It states that there must be no significant adverse impact to water quantity or quality. The phrase "significant adverse impact" is both vague and unclear and does not assure Ontarians that the quality of their water will be protected.

The issue of intra-basin transfers is a very significant concern for many stakeholders and groups in regard to this legislation. Diverting water out of the upper Great Lakes and into the lower Great Lakes will work to compound the possible and projected effects of climate change. These effects will have a profound impact on Ontario, degrading ecosystems and destroying fish, bird and wildlife habitat.

Allowing these large-scale intra-basin diversions to continue is dangerous because of their potential effects on the water levels of the upper Great Lakes such as Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. I know that has been brought

up by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, and we'll certainly be hearing much of that as the bill moves forward.

Groups affected, such as the Georgian Bay Association, are concerned that the exception criteria for this supposed ban on new intra-basin transfers are vague and could be subject to much interpretation. York region is leading the way in terms of establishing a precedent for intra-basin transfer opportunities. York region wants to draw water from Lake Simcoe and send its sewage to a treatment plant on Lake Ontario via an extension to the big pipe—a classic example right there of the intra-basin transfer.

Various stakeholders and interested parties are concerned about the long-term impacts of this big-pipe proposal and the general in-basin diversion exception because of the precedent that it does set. Other municipalities will also request and likely be awarded exceptions under the legislation for similar in-basin transfers.

Mary Muter, head of the environmental committee for the Georgian Bay Association, has stated her concerns with intra-basin transfers allowed by this bill. She says, "Once one 19-million-litre pipe goes in, others will follow and we could have a raft of pipes across southern Ontario, diverting Lake Huron/Georgian Bay water into Lake Erie and Lake Ontario."

In an article published in the *Toronto Star* on April 10, Mary Muter said, "Lake Huron/Georgian Bay water levels have been close to record low levels for the past six years. We are concerned that allowing the York region transfer out of the Lake Huron/Georgian Bay basin in Ontario will set a precedent that others will follow and cumulatively will lower lake levels even further. This will result in even more dried up wetlands and loss of fish habitat."

Allowing intra-basin transfers in this legislation is concerning, as it sends a message to other US jurisdictions on how far they have to go to fulfill the Great Lakes agreement.

She states, "No state has the ability to divert water from one Great Lake to another the way Ontario can, just because of our geography."

Dan McDermott, director of the Ontario chapter of the Sierra Club, has a similar concern. He states, "It would be hypocritical of Ontario to divert water over hundreds of kilometres between Great Lakes because" of "its geographical advantage ... while telling US jurisdictions they cannot transport water from one end of town to the other because these communities straddle the edge of the basin."

So we need to protect our water resources and to show some leadership when it comes to conserving and protecting the Great Lakes. How can we expect other jurisdictions to be careful with our water if the government of Ontario cannot take the lead in such an important area?

1630

According to Karey Shinn, chair of the Safe Sewage Committee here in Toronto, the inter-basin transfer is a "leak in the Great Lakes agreement." I quote: "The inter-

basin transfer proposed will ensure water from Georgian Bay is polluted as sewage, all the way to Lake Ontario, where it will be discharged through the Duffin Creek sewage treatment plant in Pickering. This will put additional stress on existing Lake Ontario drinking water intakes for most of Ontario's population along the shore, including Toronto residents." As my colleague the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka made reference to in his comments last week, "Diverting water out of the upper Great Lakes and into the lower Great Lakes will work to compound the possible and projected effects of climate change."

According to the Environmental Commissioner's 2005-06 annual report, Ontario has seriously neglected its duties when it has come to the Great Lakes agreement. From what we've been seeing so often, it's certainly clear that Dalton McGuinty needs to wait for a report from an independent officer of the Legislature before taking any action. In this case, it was the Environmental Commissioner's report that provided the need for this government to act. But there is also the minister responsible for the OLG, as we've seen and discussed for I think almost 150 questions now, waiting for the Ombudsman's report before doing anything to deal with those issues that are so important to the people of Ontario, that are still sitting on his hands and that he's still not taking responsibility for. We ask him every day.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services has been scathed by not one but two dreadful reports by the Ombudsman, for a lack of interest and leadership in the children and youth ministry. The latest report was for her neglect to share any care and compassion for needs of the children of our brave military men and women. That was last week.

We see a trend happening here, the shameful leadership by the Dalton McGuinty government and the ministers that I have mentioned.

Under "Water taking," subsection 34(1) states, "Despite any other act, a person shall not take more than 50,000 litres of water on any day by any means except in accordance with a permit issued under section 34 (1)." The exceptions currently listed include private domestic wells or water used for domestic and other non-commercial uses or municipal supplies. Also exempt are institutions such as schools and long-term-care homes; environmental uses such as wetlands projects or hydro powers; and agricultural uses. Additional exceptions are water takings that started before March 29, 1961.

I have some comments on private wells which I'll get to later.

This bill also includes a water conservation tax, which allows the government to charge commercial and industrial users of water to promote the practice of water conservation by highly consumptive users. But this new tax is not guaranteed to promote water conservation at all. The reality is, it's a new tax. What will it be used for? Maybe it's administrative. How much will it be? Something this government does extremely well is implementing new taxes under the guise of fancy names

designed to dissuade people from seeing what is really happening: another money grab out of the pockets of hard-working families in Ontario. They take your money; you're not sure where it goes.

All this tax will do is give the government more revenue to pay for an expanded administration. They're going to charge \$3.71 per million litres of water. It will not really work to move companies towards the practice of water conservation.

In an article published in the *Toronto Star* on April 4, Ramani Nadarajah, executive director of the Canadian Environmental Law Association, was quoted as saying, "It's not going to have a huge impact in terms of actually resulting in water conservation." It's not just us saying that; this is from the Canadian Environmental Law Association.

The Council of Canadians stated in the *Ottawa Citizen*, on April 14, "We believe Mr. McGuinty's proposal will do nothing to deter corporations from removing millions of litres of water from the Great Lakes, and will only serve to further commodify Canada's water, leaving it at great risk of depletion."

The new tax will start with highly consumptive commercial and industrial users of water such as water bottlers, canners, breweries and producers of abrasive products, but taxes on companies with fewer impacts on watersheds will begin to be phased in after 2009.

Certain sectors are exempt from paying this water tax, which has raised concerns by some interest groups about the fairness of such a water charge. The Canadian Bottled Water Association, in an article published in the *St. Catharines Standard* on April 8, stated that they are reluctantly willing to pay but believe there should be no exceptions.

Again from the Council of Canadians: "the government is sending the wrong message—that bottled water is here to stay."

So we'll be looking at the Liberal consultation process very closely. We hope that it does come soon, that we do go out to committee and hear from the public about this bill. What can we say to the Dalton McGuinty government about new taxes? They keep coming on. They promised not to raise your taxes. They signed a piece of paper with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation—all in print, all on video. We still have it, but they keep increasing your taxes. I hope the public remembers that when it comes to election time.

Certainly breaking promises has been a trend. Close coal generation plants—let me see. It got broken, re-broken and rebroken, and we still don't know for sure what's going to happen with that. How can we believe what they say?

The clean air plan was certainly based on closing the coal plants. That's what they said. They had no plan, but they did tell us they were going to close the coal-fired plants. People voted for them for that, and they did not come through on that promise. It was under Elizabeth Witmer, who was Minister of the Environment, that the Lakeview coal generating plant was closed. We came

through on the environment for the people of Ontario. The pillars may have come down when the Liberals were in power, but it was under the previous Minister of the Environment, Elizabeth Witmer, that the Lakeview generating plant was closed.

There are other promises for the environment: diverting 60% of municipal waste. Our diversion rate now is about half of that, despite that amazing promise never delivered on by the Minister of the Environment. She has finally had to admit that they're abandoning that promise of waste diversion of 60%. It's not surprising.

Another one: Six years after Justice O'Connor's recommendations, of which Dalton McGuinty promised he would implement every single one, there are at least 34 of the recommendations that remain unimplemented, even with the passage of that politically named Clean Water Act. I'll get into some more details about that, and I'm sure the members opposite have heard them before.

We can go on for a while about the promise-breaking, saying anything to get elected, but I simply don't have that much time and I know the member from Simcoe North is anxious to participate.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): No, no. Twenty minutes left.

Ms. Scott: In another 20 minutes or so.

The Clean Water Act: The Minister of the Environment touts that continuously as an excellent example of how their government has demonstrated strong leadership on water protection. We all know that the Clean Water Act, like this current bill before the Legislature, is just an empty shell, with regulations, details—the devil's always in the details—to be determined long after the next election. We've seen that pattern consistently in the present Liberal government—after the next election, after 2007. When the Clean Water Act came before the Legislature, there was a bunch of undefined terms that were central to the ability of the bill to reach its objectives. They were unclear. All of those things were left to regulation.

Again in this bill, Bill 198, we are given vague definitions that are problematic for people trying to make decisions and for the public just to understand what's going on in the bill. What is the bill going to do or not going to do when it comes to the protection of the Great Lakes? I think you should be a little more definitive—don't mind the pun.

I think it's also fair to talk for a few moments about the minister's speaking notes about the so-called Clean Water Act. She so often puts those two pieces of legislation together. We've stated very clearly that we support clean water and source water protection for Ontarians; there's not a question about that. But they're trying to drive the message that we're against clean water, and it's simply not true. The Clean Water Act was just a political name. It was about downloading responsibilities onto municipalities, avoiding, abdicating responsibilities at the provincial level. Dalton McGuinty does a good job of avoiding responsibilities.

Every farmer and small business person in Ontario is in favour of clean water. They don't need to be hit with a

hammer. The Clean Water Act was downloading responsibilities onto the municipalities and the rural land-owners. They are stewards of the land, and they have continually been beaten upon by this McGuinty Liberal government. The difference between what Dalton McGuinty believes and what we see on this side of the House is that when a government tells a farmer or a community church or a small business owner that it is introducing new rules that will cause them to spend money to protect clean water, we on this side of the House would ensure there's certainly proper funding allocated.

1640

The Clean Water Act was clearly flawed legislation. Over 250 amendments came to the original bill. Over 100 of those were the government's own amendments for the legislation. So the minister will say a lot of money was spent on the science and research ahead of the introduction of this bill—they might have spent a lot of money; they probably wasted a lot of money—but they certainly didn't get it right. The largest number of amendments were brought forward by their own government. I thank the people of Ontario who came out to the Clean Water Act committee hearings to drive the message home.

So there should be some simple guidelines here with respect to this legislation before us this afternoon, as with Bill 43, the Clean Water Act. If the government is going to bring in policies or regulations that affect the existing use of your property, you should have the ability to apply for some form of compensation. If a government intends to change the existing or permitted use of your property in the future, you should receive advance notice and the opportunity to make your opinion known before new rules come into force. If the government decision dramatically hurts your ability and your family's ability to earn a living, there should be an opportunity to appeal. These are straightforward concepts, and they've been ignored by the minister and by the Premier. It all boils down to, certainly, respect, and we don't see the Liberal government giving respect to the people, certainly in rural Ontario. It has been awful.

This is where the government actions affect the citizens, like I've mentioned with the Clean Water Act. They have to be able to be heard. I'm still waiting and we're all still waiting, and no doubt we'll continue to wait, for the Minister of Agriculture to step up to the plate to do her job of protecting the farmers who feed our cities. We're still waiting for some feedback on that. But she has decided to spin that Liberal rhetoric instead. Under Dalton McGuinty, this protection of your agriculture community is not going to happen. They haven't come through in three and a half years. I can't see that they're going to come through in the last six months, not that anyone would believe if they did promise something; you couldn't.

My fear, once again, with Bill 198 is that hard-working Ontarians in rural communities are going to be pinned with the bills while the minister gleefully takes credit. Again, more thoughtfulness, more planning: We don't see it here. The reality is that they politically

polarized the Liberal Clean Water Act. They did that intentionally. It's just an empty shell. They threw some money at it after they heard, all from rural Ontario, how flawed this legislation was. They threw some money at it to keep everybody quiet, threw things in regulation and then they threw a party after the Clean Water Act. They had the big party, the clean water party—free food, free bar. They had great baseball caps, those blue baseball caps. Maybe we're going to have a whole bunch more parties if they're throwing out this green legislation before the election—pat themselves on their back that they've done a great job for the environment.

In discussion around both Bill 198 and Bill 43, there's real concern by rural residents about private wells being metered. Let me quote from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment at that time, the member from Perth-Middlesex, on August 25 in the hearings in Peterborough: "I think I'll have to post a sign in every Tim Hortons and every feed mill in Ontario that says, 'There will be no metering of private wells.' The minister has said that over and over again." This is the member from Perth-Middlesex. He was quite confident at the time. But in Durham region just recently there was a meeting about the very topic, as their health department presented a seminar where a senior official noted that charging well owners for drawing water from their wells is coming for sure; that's a senior official who noted.

Certainly I and other members of my caucus have gotten calls and notes of concern about their wells being metered. Both the member from Perth-Middlesex and the Minister of the Environment have either said what they could to avoid this issue or more certainly have provided the assurance to the rural residents of Ontario that they would require. But, pardon the pun, Mr. Speaker, we all know that the word of Dalton McGuinty doesn't hold water.

Regardless, there are concerns—a lot of concerns—out there not being addressed properly by the ministry. In the same seminar it was noted that 23% of residents in Ontario obtain water from wells. That's a large group—it's certainly a large part of my riding—that I'm sure Dalton McGuinty would love to find a reason to throw an additional tax towards, along with the health tax which he promised he wouldn't do. More taxes, more taxes; someone is paying for Dalton McGuinty's \$22-million spending spree.

The Minister of the Environment stated last week in the Legislature, "Absolutely no way can this legislation allow for the metering of homes" from private wells. Again, a very pointed statement saying that metering of private wells and homes won't happen. Whether you can believe them or not, I'm certainly not sure. I would say no because our promise-breaking is up way over the 50 mark. They've broken promises.

The Trent-Severn Waterway is in my area, so we're still talking water. It's all about water. Addressing the symptoms of climate change is vital. It's also equally important that we focus some of our attention on adaptation.

My riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock is almost 10,000 square kilometres in central Ontario. I've got 50 towns and hamlets and I have several watersheds within my riding. The city of Kawartha Lakes is the third-largest agricultural employer in the province. Tourism is also a big part of our economy.

We are known as cottage country to the people who flock there every summer to their cottages. In Haliburton county alone the seasonal population grows by 50%. So the population grows by 50% during the peak tourism season. Ecotourism is certainly also growing in that area. We have a wonderful part of Ontario, and people flock to enjoy our beaches and our waters. We're all here to help protect them.

In the southern part of my riding, the Trent-Severn Waterway goes through. But its reservoir lakes are in the northern part, in the Haliburton county part. I've received numerous letters from cottagers on Kushog, Kashagawigamog, Canning Lake, Horseshoe Lake, White Lake and others. There is a coalition now for equitable water flow in the Trent-Severn Waterway. So there has been a lot of initiation within my riding, and I'm glad to see that the federal government, with the member from Simcoe North, Bruce Stanton, and the member from my federal riding, Barry Devolin, have got support for a review of the Trent-Severn Waterway. We look forward to the results of that review coming out.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I asked them for a review too.

Ms. Scott: I see the member from Peterborough is supportive of that also. That's good. The parties are working together, on some levels, with water.

Certainly we've heard of the water fluctuations that go on. Many residents and property owners, recreational users and tourists are affected by that fluctuation of water levels and other environmental impacts of that system, not to mention all the great fishing that we have in my riding. Their habitat needs to be protected. Water resource protection and management, renewable power and economic rejuvenation are all things that need to be considered for this area.

The Frost centre was a vital environmental and outdoor education, environmental stewardship and conservation centre that was suddenly closed in 2004 by the McGuinty Liberal government. The local area—

Mr. Leal: Is it reopening, though?

Ms. Scott: I'm going to get to that. Thank you, member from Peterborough.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and myself brought forward petitions. Over 10,000 signatures were signed in a very short period of time that helped force the present government to form the Frost working committee with people who volunteered their time for almost a year. They created a report, which they submitted to the government, and we're happy to hear that the government has seen that their ways were incorrect in 2004 by the closure of the Frost centre and put a competition out there for someone to reopen the Frost centre. So I'm happy to say that the FCI group was successful. There

was also a great bid by the Friends of the Frost Centre, but the FCI group was successful, and we're looking forward to the opening in June, I say to the member from Peterborough. Hopefully, you will be attending.

We can see that the people in Haliburton–Victoria–Brock were on the edge of saying, "You have to educate the young about the environment. You cannot close down centres like this. It's a mistake." We need as much education on the environment as we can so we're all environmental stewards. I want to thank everyone involved for that steadfast campaign on the present Liberal government on how that closing of the centre was wrong and how we've taken it, how that has moved forward. We wish the Frost Centre Institute all the best for their opening. I know they're working very hard, and we look forward to having them in the riding.

1650

In regards to Bill 198, again, it's all about the environment. We saw the \$22.4-billion increase in this year's budget spending. That's equal to an increase of \$4,500 per household. But we're also seeing from this increase in spending more broken promises—not a big surprise—and meagre results. Are Ontarians any better off? Polls say no. I don't think so; they're not feeling better off. But they're spending more of the money.

In the recent budget, the Ministry of Natural Resources was cut by \$36 million. Even properly intended environmental legislation could not be implemented without adequate resources, and here we have the present Liberal government cutting \$36 million from the budget. The Minister of the Environment had to be disappointed. She had to be begging the Minister of Finance for some more money to support all these environmental promises. But I guess they're farther down the road. You don't need any money up front here now. But really it doesn't look like there's a commitment to the environment when the budget for the Ministry of the Environment went up just such a small, small amount.

But the government across the way is certainly listening to the polls. They must be, because we've been on the big rollout of green promises. They've seen the polls. They've seen that there's a huge focus on the environment, a huge shift onto the environment. It's been keeping me busy, anyway, following all the announcements. Implementation dates of course are way down the road. It was five years ago that Dalton McGuinty was out there starting on the election promises that he was going to do wonderful-sounding things for the environment. That was five years ago. It sounded good.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): Coal-fired plants.

Ms. Scott: Oh, I've already mentioned the coal-fired plants, the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka said. There were lots of things in that promise-breaking Liberal red ink that we saw in the platform of 2003. One of them was, "We will stop allowing companies to raid our precious water supply. We will end this reckless giveaway." We're now in 2007. First implementation of this legislation is to take place in 2009. So, you know, broken

promises, extended dates—it's becoming the norm. Say anything to get elected.

Kicking off this big fanfare six months out of an election, two and a half months or whatever left in the legislative agenda—he's got a lot to do, he's got a lot of time to make up. He started making those promises over five years ago. And even if this legislation does get passed, it's not until 2009 that these rules come in. So six years after the 2003 election promise we're just starting to take action. I thought if the environment was the priority that it was supposed to be, we'd have seen things within maybe the first six months or first year of our mandate. But, no, it's the last six months of the mandate.

Great photo ops, though, that we're doing. Great locations: Lake Ontario is where we did the big photo op for this bill that we're discussing today. More promises; who knows if they'll keep them? I don't think the people of Ontario are paying attention. They're not going to believe what the Liberal government has been promising and started promising before they even were the government. So I hope that they do take stock of this. There's certainly lack of leadership, no question, on the environment.

Interjection.

Ms. Scott: Look at that: The member for Peterborough is telling me there's an announcement coming in my riding. In a week's time? The dialysis unit? Okay, that sounds great. I'm actually attending the fundraiser this Thursday. Thank you, Mr. Leal, for the dialysis unit at the Ross Memorial Hospital in Lindsay.

We hope we've got lots of clean water out there. And we're hoping that the Liberal government actually is going to do something about the environment instead of making all these promises, having all these parties saying they're doing great things and yet doing nothing.

Yesterday our leader, John Tory, made a significant policy announcement on climate change. We're still hearing that the Liberal government is going to bring a climate change plan in, but, again, I guess a little closer to the election will be the climate change plan. But that will come after the election.

Mr. Dunlop: It's tough to make priorities.

Ms. Scott: It's tough for the priorities.

The environment and climate change all require leadership. We haven't seen leadership by the Liberal government over here. We've announced a plan with targets and how we're going to get to those targets.

Interjection.

Ms. Scott: Well, we'll see what you're saying. Let's see what you're saying.

Interjections.

Ms. Scott: The plan is out there. The press release is out there. The Liberals are a little jealous because we've got a plan out there and they have no plan. They've been in government for three and a half years, and there is no plan.

It was the Conservative government that closed Lakeview. You talk about coal plant closures. We're the only ones who actually did the coal plant closures. You guys take the credit, but that's politics aside.

I know the member from Simcoe North wants to add some comments on Bill 198. I'm sure we'll be sending this out to committee as soon as possible, because we want some public input. So I would like to thank the members for their time and attention and their heckling—I appreciate that—and pass it to the member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm very pleased to rise this afternoon and make a few comments on Bill 198, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario's water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act.

First of all, I want to congratulate my colleague the member for—I call her the member from Lindsay, to be quite honest with you, because that's where the main centre of the riding is. It's one of the largest ridings we have in Ontario, and I share about 50 kilometres of border with that particular riding. I can tell you that her constituents are very happy with the job she has done as a rookie MPP, following in her dad's footsteps. I'm sure that as long as Laurie Scott wants to be a member of provincial Parliament, she'll get strong support from her community.

I can tell you that there are a lot of environmental concerns in that particular part of the province. I can think of a couple almost immediately. The member mentioned, first of all, the Trent-Severn Waterway, which is one of the most beautiful heritage river systems in our country. We're very proud that my colleague the MP for Simcoe North, Bruce Stanton, and Barry Devolin, the member for her riding, teamed up and got unanimous support in the federal Parliament to do a complete study on upgrading the Trent-Severn Waterway because it's such a strong environmental and economic generator of interest and money, not only for Ontarians but for Canadians and for a lot of American travellers as well.

We also share an area called the Carden Plain, which is probably one of the largest areas of limestone development you can find anywhere in the province, I believe. If you go out in the area behind Gamebridge and Brechin, there are literally hundreds and hundreds of acres of land where you can basically kick the topsoil off the top of the ground and you have class one aggregate right below that. I'll get to that in a second.

I do want to say, though, as we comment on this bill, that I don't think there's probably a person in this province and certainly no one in this House who doesn't believe in good, clean drinking water, monitoring it carefully and making sure that we protect this very valuable resource for future generations.

I have an organization in my riding—and they're also in part of the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka's riding—called the Georgian Bay Association. I really have enjoyed working with the Georgian Bay Association. Different people sit on that committee, representing different cottagers' associations right up the shore of Georgian Bay. Their whole concern is to provide good water quality, proper levels and maintaining the pro-

tection of Georgian Bay. In my particular riding, I have approximately 500 kilometres of shoreline, so you can imagine how many cottage associations, ratepayer associations and groups come to my office and write to me and write to the ministry about their concerns. I can tell you that clean water and the protection of water is probably the highest priority they have. I could start here and name probably 75 ratepayer or cottage organizations that have a deep concern for this.

1700

Why I wanted to zero in for a second on the Georgian Bay Association is that they've drawn attention to water levels in Georgian Bay. This whole bill is about Georgian Bay and Lake Huron—the Great Lakes, of course. What they're concerned about is that we are seeing declining water levels in Georgian Bay. For many decades, people believed there was a cycle where you would have seven or eight years where the water levels would increase, and then they would decrease over the next seven years, and that cycle would continue on. But what we've seen in basically the last 20 years is a continual lowering of water levels, and then that has some very serious consequences as far as wetlands are concerned, as far as real estate values are concerned and, of course, just the look of the shoreline if you're getting water levels that are receding way out into the lake. Then there's the whole issue around who actually owns that land.

I can't begin to explain how valuable a source Mary Muter from the Georgian Bay Association is, not only for myself and for the association, but she's a resource that government can take advantage of and use her input and knowledge. I can tell you that she has some strong concerns about this bill, and I certainly hope that they'll be given prime opportunity at committee to mention or to put on the record the concerns they have and potential amendments that should be made to the legislation.

I can tell you one thing that they are strongly opposed to; I got a message from Mary this morning on my phone. The intra-basin transfers or diversions should be banned or prohibited. That's the one thing they're asking for. I would love to hear a lot more from the ministry and from the people in this House on that kind of content.

Why they're so concerned is, you go right back to the water level question and a report they put out. There's only one Georgian Bay. I know I can't put these up in the House, because you can be kicked out of here or they'll take it away from you, but I was at a Rotary function in the fall up in Midland when Mary came and spoke to the community and really sounded the alarm on Georgian Bay water levels. This particular organization paid I believe it was \$250,000, and they provided a report called the Baird report on water levels in the Great Lakes. They concluded that probably the greatest factor or the number one factor in declining water levels in Georgian Bay is the fact that there's a problem with erosion in the St. Clair River. It's gotten much deeper, and what you've seen is that Lake Erie has gone up in height and Georgian Bay and Lake Huron have gone down. So it's causing some fairly severe problems.

Now we're into this study mode, where everyone wants to study this to death, but the reality is that we have to study it fairly quickly, because what we're seeing is that this can't go on for five or 10 or 15 years. We actually need some input, some infrastructure money invested. It's not just Canadian money or Ontario money. This will be money from all the jurisdictions that border on the Great Lakes and are part of the International Joint Commission. You can imagine how difficult it could be trying to put something through that organization, with just the bureaucracy alone. But the reality is that the Great Lakes, I believe, provide 20% of the fresh water in the world. I could be wrong on that statistic, but I don't think I am. You can see, just to the world's supply of water, how important maintaining the level of Georgian Bay and Lake Huron is, and making sure we properly protect and enhance that great resource that we call the Great Lakes.

That is one of the areas. I don't have all of the details that the Georgian Bay Association would like to submit at committee hearings, but my guess is that they will be there. They'll comment on the positive things in the bill, and of course, they'll comment on the things they feel should be changed to enhance the bill as well. I look forward to that, and I look forward to trying to sit in on some of those committee hearings so I can take part in that.

When you have 500 kilometres of shoreline in your riding, and your riding borders Lake Simcoe, Lake Couchiching, the Severn River and probably 150 kilometres of Georgian Bay, and you've got some of the largest islands in the province in your riding—I can tell you that we take it very, very seriously. I know that a lot of the governments in our country today are on this environmental swing. You've seen that in the last probably eight or nine months, where everybody sort of jumped on the environmental bandwagon and everyone has gone green. The folks in my riding have been green for decades. This is not new to them. They've always been concerned about water quality, water levels and the proper kinds of development around this very, very valuable resource.

For that reason, I'd like to make some comments on a number of other areas that are of great concern to the residents of the riding of Simcoe North. Of course, I think it impacts on many of the other ridings as well, because people like to travel to these beautiful parts of the province like the Kawartha Lakes, Muskoka and Lake Simcoe. These are all beautiful tourist regions. The people who visit our areas are expecting good, clean, fresh water and they expect our governments to protect this water as well.

I'm not saying for a second that this bill hasn't got a lot of good points to it, but we want to make sure we get it right, and we want to make sure that when we do get it right, the infrastructure follows it. You can study these things to death, you can create all kinds of legislation, but in the end, if you don't take action and actually implement the bill in a proper fashion and put programs in

place, like what the Georgian Bay Association is asking you to do with the Great Lakes water levels and that, then you're not accomplishing anything. We could be sitting here 15 years from now and some of these things won't be corrected.

While we're at that, I wanted to mention something. We're talking about water volumes, the lowering of the lakes and the climate change issue. I have to go back to my old issue: The number one issue, probably, in the riding I have today is this development of the landfill site at site 41 in the township of Tiny. It's been an ongoing, long process but Walkerton changed everything. We thought that Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry basically would have stopped the building of upward gradient pressure landfills in the province of Ontario. It hasn't done it.

The day we opened the Ontario Clean Water Act hearings—it was the Friday before that when the minister gave the final approval on the design on site 41. That was almost a slap in the face. I believe that five busloads of people from Tiny township, from Elmvalle and Midland, came down from site 41. They all wanted to point out, “You know what? I think we've made a mistake here, Minister. We can turn this thing around.”

It wasn't a problem for Minister Dombrowsky, the former Minister of the Environment. She clearly found a change, when she decided that the Adams mine had suddenly become a lake, because there was water in the bottom of it. They called it the Adams Mine Lake Act. And do you know what? It was changed in this House.

We know there was opposition up there to that particular lake, but they were mixing water and waste. That was simple, and that's what was happening in the Adams mine lake, and I know it was a big issue for the man who is now the Minister of Natural Resources. I understood he might have quit over it if they hadn't provided that type of legislation.

If we went out right today and dug a hole the size of the base of the Adams mine lake in the field that holds site 41, I can guarantee that overnight it would fill up and you could call it a lake. You could call it a lake, but we can't get the government to change on that.

They compensated people in Kirkland Lake. They put a process through. It was all part of the legislation. I introduced a bill here and put in literally thousands of petitions. We've gone nowhere with it, it's getting closer and closer to actually opening, and I think it's a mistake. I thought that Walkerton had changed everything. I thought that's why we had a Clean Water Act. I thought that's why we had this bill in front of us today. I thought that's why the whole world was going green, because people died because of poor water in Walkerton. Who will ever know whose fault it was, but the reality is, it happened, and I thought we were supposed to follow it.

1710

One of the things following it is the government saying, “We'll put a tax on the water bottlers.” That's got to be probably the most—I mean, I can understand. I haven't had a water bottling company call me yet. I don't

think it's a terrible thing to them, because—you know what?—they're just going to pass it on to the customer. I would be interested to know. I think if it's going to cost them another five cents or three cents for water, the bottle of water will go up two or three cents. The customer pays, so it's a tax, plain and simple as that.

The problem is, how are they going to administer that tax? For every million litres or so of water, they're going to charge four or five bucks or three bucks or something like that. Who's going to administer that? You know what? There will be a whole department of the Ministry of the Environment created in all likelihood, and that will take away from resources that are needed out there for enforcement and approvals etc. It will be to try to administer this little bit of money that they're getting back out of it.

I'd actually be more concerned about what they could possibly do to improve on—could we possibly reuse the plastic bottles, for example, which I think are probably the number one thing that gets thrown in the garbage or left on the side of the road these days?

One thing I want to essentially say about the site before I get off this particular topic is the amount of water that will have to be pumped out of the ground to actually dry the site so they can install the landfill. I understand that over about a 40-year period of that landfill, it will be around 80 billion litres.

Ms. Scott: No. Eighty billion?

Mr. Dunlop: Eighty billion—not million; 80 billion litres. That's how much will have to be pumped out into Georgian Bay. It will flow down through the St. Clair system into Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence River and out into the ocean. So 80 billion litres of good, clean groundwater will leave that site.

While we're on water quality, I wanted to go back to something that's near and dear to my heart, and that of course is the quality of water in what I would call the sixth Great Lake, Lake Simcoe. I think I've said that in this House before. I'm very proud. It's a lake that I have 100 kilometres of shoreline on. Ms. Scott shares some of that shoreline with me, and she certainly knows the issues facing the constituents, particularly the ratepayer associations, around that I guess about 400 kilometres around Lake Simcoe.

Water quality is everything, and the protection of Lake Simcoe is a high priority of mine, my personal priority. As an MPP, I feel you need some top priorities in your riding, and I can tell you that working with not only the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, but all the different special interest groups like, for example, Environmental Defence, Ladies of the Lake, Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition—we can go on and on. They are all interested in the same thing: making sure that that lake is protected and the natural resources are put there.

Now, this government—and this is what I tried to point out last year in a resolution. I am going to read this resolution back on the record, if I may, because I believe it's something I would like to repeat. I read it when I speak at events. It's a resolution that was passed by all

members, by everyone who was present in the House, on November 23 last year:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the provincial government must:

"Recognize that the county of Simcoe and the cities of Barrie and Orillia offer a superior environment and quality of life for families to live and work;

"Recognize that Lake Simcoe has been an integral part of the heritage and culture of the region and that the lake generates approximately \$250 million per year in economic benefit;

"Recognize the development pressures that the Oak Ridges moraine and greenbelt legislation and Places to Grow Act have placed on the Lake Simcoe watershed;

"Recognize that the protection and improvement of water quality in Lake Simcoe must be a government priority;

"Recognize that the intergovernmental action plan will require substantial provincial investment in infrastructure to accommodate the anticipated growth of approximately 250,000 citizens over the next 25 years;

"Provide the means for adequate funding to accommodate the approved growth in the Lake Simcoe watershed;

"Recognize the research and reports by various stakeholder groups that have worked tirelessly to promote the need for water quality protection and improvement of the Lake Simcoe watershed; and

"Ensure that any future development must go hand in hand with comprehensive watershed planning and funded protection of the Lake Simcoe and Nottawasaga watersheds."

That was supported in this House, and I still appreciate the fact that all three parties supported it that particular day.

I wanted to say that while I was disappointed, on the week of March 19 when the federal government came out with their budget—I see the member from Whitby–Ajax is here today behind me; her spouse, of course, is the Honourable Jim Flaherty, the Minister of Finance—I was so thankful that Minister Flaherty and Prime Minister Harper provided \$12 million under a national water strategy for the protection of Lake Simcoe over two years. That's a wonderful start. Four days later, on March 22, when I expected it, after all these discussions that are apparently taking place between the federal and provincial governments, not a nickel was put into it. Not a nickel was put into Lake Simcoe, and after this House had passed this resolution.

So although we can stand here and pretend we're really glorious, having these fancy press conferences, promoting Bill 198 and the Clean Water Act and everything, when it actually comes to doing something, they don't do anything; it's all spin.

That's very, very disappointing, because Lake Simcoe, Georgian Bay—these are all areas that are some of the most interesting parts of our beautiful province. Although they don't hold seats in those areas, it's interesting that not a penny came, even to try to provide some assurance that the government actually cared about the water in

Lake Simcoe. They've planned on a Barrie and area option of growth under the intergovernmental action plan that I think has basically been ignored.

We're going to see 300,000 or 400,000 people added to the population of Simcoe county over the next 25 years, and I'm going to tell you, there has absolutely got to be a strong infrastructure plan put in place so that lake can be protected and, at the same time, the Nottawasaga River can be protected because we have two watersheds in Simcoe County, plus the Severn Sound Environmental Association.

So, as I said earlier, we take our water very, very seriously. Obviously, at the committee hearings, we'll want to hear from people like the Georgian Bay Association, the water bottling people. I would expect the quarry people and the golf course operators will want to come in and see what's next for them. There are a lot of people who will have a lot of interest in this bill and, of course, the general population, because in my opinion, this is probably the first step in metering rural housing if these guys stay in power, or if they're ever fortunate enough to get back in power after the next election.

I can tell you, I look forward to those committee hearings. That's what's important at this point. I do appreciate the fact that I've been allowed to share some of Ms. Scott's leadoff time today. It's always a pleasure to follow her, and I look forward to debate and comments on my 22 minutes that I spent here this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): First of all, I want to say that I think the participation of both members was useful in laying out what this bill is all about and what some of the pros and some of the cons are to this particular bill. I'll have a chance a little bit later to speak to some of these.

But I agree with them. There's an issue here to be dealt with, and that is that the issue of water-taking from one of the Great Lakes to another does represent a problem when it comes to how the water levels in the upper-stream Great Lakes are affected and how that affects the wetlands as well.

We know, for example, the big pipe project that is now being contemplated, bringing water from Georgian Bay down to north of Toronto and then discharging that water through the sewer system and then into Lake Ontario. I think something like almost 20 million litres a day is going to be taken out of that Georgian Bay basin and transported over pipes into the north Toronto area.

Georgian Bay and Lakes Huron and Superior are pretty large and can probably take that hit on a one-day basis, but you start looking at the cumulative. That's the question I would like to see if my colleagues are able to speak to: the cumulative effect that withdrawing 20 million litres a day is going to have on the water levels up in Georgian Bay.

The other issue is that this may not be the only project. We know that other municipalities on both sides of the border are looking at similar endeavours, as far as drawing of water from those particular lakes. I think one of

the things we need to assure ourselves of is that whatever the amount of water that's drawn from the upper-stream lakes is not going to affect water levels negatively as you discharge them into the lower-stream lakes.

The other part that we didn't get into is, what does that mean for the ecology of both of those lakes, drawing from one to the other? Are there issues having to do with the ecology of both of those lakes?

1720

Mr. Leal: I wish I had longer than two minutes to respond to my colleagues the members for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock and Simcoe North. I can tell you, as a person who is on a well and septic tank within the city of Peterborough, we will not be putting meters on private wells. This gentleman from Durham region who was spreading that information was absolutely wrong. It was a disservice to many people when he put that information out there because he's totally wrong on that matter.

Interjection: It's fear-mongering.

Mr. Leal: It's fear-mongering at its worst.

Let me tell you that Bill 198 is of course of great concern to me. The Trent-Severn runs through my riding. Right now, Ken East, who is with the Trent-Severn, is doing the watershed study within the Trent-Severn. I'm very concerned about water levels because of two floods that hit my community in 2002 and 2004.

Let me say, there are new provisions, if passed, for new and expanded transfer of over 379,000 litres between the five Great Lakes watersheds that will be subject to new environmental criteria upon adoption of this agreement. The proposed new increased transfers would not be approved unless it is demonstrated that the water transferred will be returned to the source Great Lakes watershed with an allowance for consumptive use. Smaller proposals may be exempted if returning the water is not feasible, environmentally sound or cost-effective. The need for water control cannot be avoided through water conservation or efficient use. The amount of water is limited to reasonable quantities. There will be no significant adverse impacts to water quantity or quality. The proposal incorporates water conservation and efficiency measures. The proposal complies with applicable laws, including a boundary Safe Drinking Water Act. This will mean that the Ministry of the Environment reviews are fully integrated to ensure that any new transfer requirements—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I commend the member for Simcoe North on his presentation. And the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, our environment critic, did a great job of explaining Bill 198, this water act. Both Garfield Dunlop and Laurie Scott know of what they speak and they represent ridings of beautiful rivers and lakes.

We know that the Great Lakes provisions in this proposed legislation put in place strict regulation with respect to increases in any current diversions. We know it outlines stricter rules with respect to some of the very

large proposals that require that water be returned to the same lake from whence it was drawn.

I'd like to make mention of an idea concerning a Lake Erie pipeline. I represent a riding—half of my riding is under water. There are not many votes out there, but there's lots of work to be done in that area in the crown land under Lake Erie. This idea has been kicked around by farm groups as far as drawing water from Lake Erie for irrigation-based agriculture, given the series of droughts we went through several years ago. It would benefit farming and the irrigation-based agriculture on the Norfolk Sand Plain in Brant, Oxford, Elgin and Norfolk county. For example, once it hits Highway 3, the water can be chlorinated for use by towns along there. I know there is interest in Kitchener–Waterloo. We know that Guelph and Brantford can well be at their limit. Again, the water is taken out and returns back to the same lake.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Thank you for giving me the chance to speak and support the bill before us here, the proposed Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act, which would amend the Ontario Water Resources Act and other legislation.

I heard the member from Simcoe North speaking about this issue and the other member from the Conservatives talking about the importance of our water in the province of Ontario. No doubt about it: It's very important, especially in this era. As you know, we need a lot of water, especially clean water, and there are so many different treaties and protocols between us as a province and the states around us about the amount of water we can take from the lakes which surround the province of Ontario. In order to protect this clean water we have to come up with laws and regulations to make sure that water is safe and being used in a good way, especially for the agriculture community across the province of Ontario.

It's important to us as a party right now in power to make sure all of the safeguard mechanisms are in place, to make sure all the water remains clean, remains used efficiently and without any waste. All of us were talking about it. It's important especially for the farming community and also people who live in the cities. In London we put on a big project to utilize the water to come to London and the surrounding area because we know it's important, the water. We are lucky in the province of Ontario. We live in an area where we have a lot of water, but we don't want to take it for granted. As you know, many different countries across the globe are fighting very hard for clean water. We have a lot here, but in order to make it accessible and maintain it as clean as possible and utilize it to be beneficial for all the farming communities and the cities who benefit from clean water, that's why I'm speaking in support. Hopefully the members opposite will come forward and support us, because it's a good way to do it.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. One of the opposition members has an opportunity to reply if they wish.

Ms. Scott: I'm pleased to conclude and thank the member from Simcoe North for helping out with the hour leadoff. I know he has done a great job of bringing the concerns of Lake Simcoe and all of his riding to the Legislature with respect to clean water and the effects that are happening up there with the leapfrog effects from growth and his acknowledgement of what the federal government is doing in their Trent-Severn waterway study.

The member from Timmins-James Bay made some good points on how this is all going to work with the Great Lakes and the water levels, the effect.

The member from Peterborough had the first-hand experience of a lot of water a couple of years ago, I guess we can say, and the infrastructure needs that are there. We have another Liberal member on record now as saying that they are not going to meter private wells, so I'm glad that the member brought that forward.

The member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, who has a great deal of background in the environment and who was the critic for our party for the environment, has been following the Clean Water Act and now this bill and he gives a lot of valuable input, and the member from London-Fanshawe, who was on the Clean Water Act tour with us, so he heard first-hand the concerns from rural Ontario.

Bill 198 has got different sections that we have mentioned here. The real intent of what environment policies should be addressing is that we have to change the way we do business for the long term here, and I think that has certainly come out in the bill. It's not just our environmental health; it's our economic health. If we don't have a good economy we don't have a strong environment. We all have to work together.

We hope that this bill will go out for input, for consultation, to everyone concerned. The member from Simcoe North brought that forward. I'm sure the ladies of Lake Simcoe will come out. Many of the associations in his riding have been green long before a lot of people in Ontario were paying attention to our environment.

So I thank the members for their time and look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bisson: I'm going to attempt, as best as I can with my voice today, to hold it together for a few minutes. This stupid cold keeps on coming back. But I want to put a couple of things on the record. I really had a couple of questions that I want to place because I don't pretend to understand all of the intricacies of the various projects that are being proposed in the southern part between Georgian Bay and Lake Ontario, so I'm hoping I'm going to get some responses from members in regard to that.

1730

I just want to raise a couple of concerns. Those concerns may be based on assumptions that I may be erring in making, so I'm looking for a bit of help here in this particular debate.

The first one is, I'm not sure if I understand it right: The big pipe project is, as I understand it, to draw water

from Georgian Bay to cities north of Toronto and then discharge that water into Lake Ontario. I guess if that is the case—because I was just trying to double-check my facts here really quickly, and I wasn't able to get to some of the people I needed to talk to—I understand the need. Every community needs to have safe drinking water, and we need to draw water from somewhere. Be it Lake Ontario or Georgian Bay or Lake Simcoe or wherever it might be, we need to do that. But there are a couple of things that are kind of troubling me. I again look for a little bit of help from some of the members of the assembly. That is, if you're drawing from one watershed and you're discharging to another, it seems to me that there probably is some inherent problem with that in regard to what possibly might be in the water where you're drawing from one watershed and then dropping it into a separate watershed that's not connected.

One of the things that I think we need to take a look at—and it would be interesting to see this at the committee stage—is, for example, if we're drawing water from the Georgian Bay watershed into north of the city of Toronto and providing water for those communities, presumably that water then will go down the drain and eventually end up back in Lake Ontario. Yes, I understand that all those lakes are connected by river and that water that basically starts in Lake Superior flows all the way to Lake Erie and beyond. I understand that. But it seems to me that I've heard in this debate, by way of the media and others, that there are some concerns in regard to possibly what some of the consequences are environmentally from drawing water from that one watershed to the other. I think that's one of the things that generally the public needs to know: Is this an issue, yes or no? And if it is an issue, what is able to be done to mitigate it?

I guess the last question is, can you mitigate it? I think that's just a fair question to ask in debate. I don't pretend to know what the answer to that question is. I'm not a water scientist, so I don't pretend in any way to know what the answer to the question is; it's only a question I pose. I say it again just to be very clear: If we're drawing water from one watershed, be it the Georgian Bay watershed, and eventually by way of drainage we're allowing it to go to another watershed, which is Lake Ontario, in the end, what does it mean to the ecologies of both Lake Ontario and Georgian Bay?

The other issue that I think is an interesting one is the issue of water levels from one lake to another. I've flown over Georgian Bay I don't know how many times—I'm a pilot—and I understand how big that is. It's an awful big body of water. There's a lot of water. It's connected to Lake Huron. But the point is, if you're drawing 20 million litres per day on a project such as the big pipe project and you figure out the cumulative effect that may or may not have on water levels, again that's something that you've got to take a look at and take into account: Does drawing that kind of water over a period of time have a cumulative impact on the environment of Georgian Bay? I recognize that you probably have to draw a heck of a lot of water to bring Georgian Bay and

Lake Huron down by half an inch. That's an awful lot of water. But again, it's a cumulative effect. If we have a policy where we allow water to be drained from one watershed to go into another and you have water being drained at large volumes such as 20 million litres a day and you've got one for community A and one for community B and one for community C and you do that around the Great Lakes, it does represent at one point some type of impact on the watershed. I would just say from the perspective of the wetlands, that's really where you're going see those effects first.

So again, I don't pretend to be the expert. I'm not a water scientist; I'm not a biologist, so I don't pretend to know the answer to those questions. But they're questions that I want to pose in this debate so that when we do get to committee we're able to have people come to us and tell us, yes or no, that is an issue. Will the draining of water at those levels affect the water levels in the lakes, which may or may not be a problem? I think what's probably a more desperate problem is what happens upstream on the rivers that flow into Georgian Bay and Lake Huron and others and what that means to—it's funny, this place. Sometimes I look around the Legislature and I get chuckles. Anyway, I was just saying what that means to the wetlands. I think it's something we need to take into consequence. We recognize that the wetlands are the purifiers of the water that we eventually are able to drink. Wetlands are able to absorb a fair amount of toxins and are able to purify that water. If we affect our wetlands in a negative way, that affects the ecology, and that effect on the ecology is felt further down the food chain or up the food chain, depending on which way you look at it, vis-à-vis the water itself and the water quality. It also affects the organisms that live off the water, everything from small micro-organisms all the way to larger mammals, and even us at the other end of the food chain.

I don't pretend that this is a catastrophic problem, but I think we need to ask ourselves a couple of questions. Experience has told us that far too often in our society, not only here in Canada but across the world, we have at times done things that we thought were not going to negatively affect the environment and then found out that they did. It caused huge problems when it comes to people's health and what it means to the local ecology, to the point of almost not being able to repair it.

I will tell you one story that I know of particular to where I live. We have a family cottage on Kamiskotia Lake that my parents bought in the early 1960s. Back at that time, the Kamiskotia mine was in operation there. That mine was originally opened during the war because it was able to produce copper for the war effort. At that time, we were in a hurry to get copper into the smelters around Canada and North America to build the machinery and munitions we needed for war.

We had very weak requirements when it came to what this mine had to do to protect the local environment. What they did in this case was that they had an underground operation where they mined copper, they skipped

it to the surface—skipping is the process of bringing ore from underground to the surface—and processed it through the mill. Then what you do in a mill in a copper or gold mine is that you crush the rock into very fine powder or dust. You put in water and chemicals, and then, by a process of flotation, take out the valuables, and what's left is all of the garbage, the compacted dust that used to be rock and all the chemicals. That is then discharged into tailings dams, and those tailings dams are supposedly designed to contain that discharge so that there's a natural process of evaporation and a natural process, as well as a man-made process, of bringing down the levels of chemicals within those tailings dams to eventually be able to rehabilitate them.

A great example is Detour Lake mine, which is south of Moosonee and just north of Timmins, about halfway in between. They built a gold mine there back in the 1980s. It operated about 20 years. If you went there today, because it's been decommissioned under the mine closure act, you wouldn't even know there was a mine there. We operated a gold mine there for 20 years, and if you fly over, you can hardly see a footprint of a mine because all the buildings have been taken down. But what's more remarkable is that the technology of discharging the waste into the tailings dam was such that they were able to mitigate the impact on the environment so that you can hardly see it when you fly overhead.

In the case of Kamiskotia Lake, which I talked about earlier—and this is why I raise it in this debate—they discharged the tailings just over the edge. They didn't build tailings dams because, they said, "We're in a war. We've got to go out and fight the Germans and the Japanese, and we're going to do what we've got to do to get the munitions we need." As a result, it's a huge ecological problem in the area. What happened was that the tailings got into the environment, spread over a fairly large area, and eventually got into the water table. When it got into the water table, all hell broke loose. You had cyanide and all kinds of chemicals leaching into the water table and coming up in areas 10 and 15 miles away.

I remember being on a fishing trip on the Kamiskotia River with my brother some years ago in an area where we used to fish for trout and pickerel—clear water. You could drink it out of the river naturally because there was absolutely no human contact on that river. There's no housing; nothing. It's basically out in the bush. We were out fishing and we were not catching anything. Imagine these pages. I'll bring you fishing. Sarah would know very well because she probably fishes somewhere up in Sudbury. I'm going to single her out. Anyway, I'm having fun. What the heck. The point is that you don't catch any fish where you know there used to be fish.

My brother and I were thinking to ourselves, "Is it the bait we're using? Is the sun too hot? What is it?" So we decided to float downstream. We kept on going down the river and eventually ended up in an area further than where we normally fished and started noticing a discoloration of the water. The water was no longer brown,

because we know that the mud in that area makes the water look brown. It started to have a red tinge to it. So we kept on going a little bit further and a little bit further. Finally we got to an area where there were plumes of red goo coming up in the river. It was the discharge from the Kamiskotia tailings that had worked its way into the aquifer. The aquifer is dumping itself in different parts of the environment, and in this particular case in the Kamiskotia River. It polluted everything downstream. As a result, there's no longer any fishing, no longer any sort of activity as far as game along that river because it was, quite frankly, poisoned.

1740

We reported it to the MNR and the Ministry of Mines at the time. I was a member of provincial Parliament at that point; I guess that would have been the early 1990s sometime. As a result of some investments that we started and the Conservatives finished and, actually, the Liberal government is continuing—we've had to spend almost \$40 million of mitigation through the mine reclamation fund to try to contain the spill that happened at the Kamiskotia mine. That's but one small example of what could happen if you don't pay attention to what you're discharging into the environment. Here was a mine that was built for a good reason, for the war effort. We wanted to have copper to furnish the war effort, and we didn't take the time to do a simple thing such as contain the tailings.

Here we are, some 60 years later, still paying the price. The ecology of the Kamiskotia River was negatively impacted. It almost got into Kamiskotia Lake, the lake that our cottage is on. We're upstream, so we got kind of lucky there, but the damage that thing did was amazing. If you take the time and come to my constituency, I'll gladly bring you for a flight in the airplane to show you the affected area. That one mine is fairly large.

All I'm saying is that that doesn't have to be the case. There are all kinds of great examples where mines built under the current mine reclamation act that was passed in the early 1990s by Shelley Martel, when she was the minister of mines, that has been in place now for that many years—it has done a really good job of protecting the environment. I invite anybody to fly over Detour Lake mine and take a look at the impact that the Detour Lake mine has had on the environment. It's almost nil. And I would argue, if you take a look at the De Beers mine up in Attawapiskat, that 10 years after its closure, you won't even know that there was a mine there.

All I'm saying is that there is a way for us to extract resources from our environment and benefit economically from it, but there are also some things that we've got to do to protect ourselves from future liability and damage to the environment. I think this is one of these acts that we've got to be fairly careful of in making sure we get that done.

On that point, I'll just end this part of the debate by saying that we really need to look at this act from the perspective of asking, "Do we really understand what we're doing? Have we looked at the science? Does the

science say that it's okay to draw water from one aquifer and dump it into another aquifer?" Because that's what we're going to be doing by way of this bill. If the answer is yes, we can do that safely, that there might be science that allows us to do that, then God bless, let's do it. But if not, then we have to ask ourselves a question: "Should we be doing this?"

The other thing I want to speak to is the royalties that we're going to be charging in this particular initiative. As I understand it, this bill will provide the province of Ontario the ability to charge a royalty of about \$3.71 per million litres of water drawn. All I'm saying is that, man, that's awfully cheap, and we need to understand why that's awfully cheap. It's cheap because, I think the answer is, we signed the NAFTA agreement. Under NAFTA, we've limited ourselves as a nation to be able to control our own natural resources and to control royalties on those resources, in this case, the Great Lakes waters.

As I remember it—I again would have to go back and look at this in some detail—we hamstrung ourselves by signing the NAFTA agreement, locking ourselves into things that may not necessarily have been to our advantage as a nation and as a province. As a result, as I understand it, we are only allowed to charge what would be the administrative costs of our managing this water system or the water-taking from any water-taking permit. So the ministry is only able to recap its cost, and we cannot benefit from that natural resource as a people. I just think that's kind of a weird situation to put ourselves in.

Imagine Ralph Klein having royalties that would basically say that you can only cover the administrative costs of issuing permits. Alberta certainly would have sales tax on everything you buy today, the people of Alberta would not have a heritage fund, and the province of Alberta wouldn't be as rich as it is today. But I've got to take the opportunity, while talking about royalties, to talk about how you could go wrong on the other side of royalties. That's what has happened in the last budget with regard to the De Beers mining project.

We have a situation where if you develop a mine north of 50, you are charged a 5% royalty—and that's fair—for any extraction of natural resources for mining that comes out of the ground. So if I start a gold mine, a diamond mine, a zinc mine or whatever it might be, and I'm in an isolated area—30 kilometres away from a road; it's declared isolated—I pay a 5% royalty. We do that because the mine has to pay for the complete infrastructure of operating the mine. They've got to build the roads at their cost, which are public roads eventually. They've got to bring in the hydro lines at their own cost, which become public. In the case of the mine up in Attawapiskat, De Beers is building a power line from south, north of Timmins, all the way up to the De Beers Victor site, which is 400-and-some-odd miles, entirely at their cost. The people of the communities in between are going to get to utilize that power as a result, so we're getting a public benefit from it, the same way that we operate winter roads and other infrastructures that are going to be built.

So De Beers, as a remote mining project, was supposed to be charged 5% on royalties for diamonds that are extracted from the ground. De Beers made a decision to go forward with the project, based on the economics and based on what is there, knowing that they would only pay 5%. Imagine their surprise when they found out in the budget a couple of weeks ago that royalties have risen to 13%. But what really galls them is not only that it has changed the economics for their project; you've almost tripled the royalties. In fact, they tell me now that if they had to sell this project to De Beers international—the global De Beers company—they probably would not have approved it. This mine would not be being built today because the economics would be such.

The point is that you can go open a gold mine next to the De Beers mining project in Attawapiskat, at the Victor site, and you'll pay a 5% royalty on the extraction of gold but you'll pay 13% on the extraction of diamonds. I just say to the government that this is really a dumb idea for all kinds of reasons.

The first thing is, it's unfair. That's the first thing. You don't tax GM differently than you do Ford. There is a tax regime that is based on industry, and the diamond mining industry is the same as any mining process. It's the extraction of ore from underground. So we should have a tax regime that says, "If you're gold or you're diamond, you pay the same royalty," the same way that Mr. Ford, Mr. GM and Mr. Chrysler pay the same type of taxes based on the same formulas. You shouldn't treat one differently than the other. That's the first argument.

The second thing is what it means for us when it comes to investment. This project is \$1 billion-plus to construct. The amount of money that you're going to get in extra royalties is going to be somewhat significant. But the danger of loss of future projects is very costly for the province of Ontario. Ontario was able to attract that billion-dollar investment from De Beers. Why? Because De Beers Canada convinced their international company that Ontario was a stable place to do business. It was maybe more expensive to have labour here. It certainly was a lot tougher to get environmental approvals here, but the one thing they were able to say—they had a good find—was that there was stability in Ontario. You knew that if you went into a project in Ontario, the government of Ontario wouldn't act like a banana republic somewhere else in the world and change the rules on you like that. That was the basis by which they sold the project.

We're now sending a message to the international community, "Come and invest in Ontario, and maybe we'll change the rules for you at the 11th hour of the development of a project or after it has gone into production." Who wants to invest in that climate? So the amount of money we're going to lose in the future from people who will not develop mines in northern Ontario, is going to outstrip by far any gains that we're going to make from royalties at 13%. I just say to the Premier, to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and to the Minister of Finance, really, back off from this one. We're going to have a chance to go to committee. Think

about what you're doing and back off it because, in the end, this is going to be harmful.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for this very short time I've had in debate. But I think I posed a couple of interesting questions to the members of the assembly and hope to hear more about this as we go into committee.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Leal: I listened very intently to the speech from my colleague the member from Timmins-James Bay. Perhaps I can be of assistance in terms of the big-pipe issue. The big pipe, of course, is a proposed extension of the York region sewer system to service communities beyond the Lake Ontario watershed.

1750

The first phase of Bill 198 regulates new and increased transfers of water related to water withdrawals. The return of this water, usually in the form of waste water, would also be captured under Bill 198. He spent some time looking at that aspect.

The bill would also establish authority to make regulations governing the transfer of waste water between the Great Lakes watersheds, and authority to include requirements and other approvals, such as sewage works approval, that may be necessary to deal with transfers.

Bill 198 would also regulate new and increased transfers of water. Bill 198 would also contain a transition provision that would allow existing transfers to obtain a determination, from the director, of how much water is currently being transferred by the taking and therefore not considered increased taking.

These new legal authorities would allow the province to ensure that any newer increased transfer such as through the York region big pipe will meet the necessary legal requirements. Prior to this agreement being in place in the legislation, there was no specific legal requirement for intra-basin transfers between Great Lakes watersheds such as the big pipe, the extension of the York region system beyond the Lake Ontario watershed.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 198 goes to great length to address some of these intra-basin transfers. It's a very significant piece of legislation, which I think will serve the water basins of the Great Lakes very effectively.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I want to respond to the comments from the member from Timmins-James Bay. Certainly this is an important piece of legislation. I share the comments that were made by my colleague from Simcoe North with respect to the seriousness of the situation facing the Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay bodies of waters. They are certainly issues because of the Liberal government's decision to exempt the Simcoe county and Parry Sound-Muskoka areas from the green belt, which have led to significant water pressures.

I was here last week listening to my friend from Simcoe-Grey commenting about his concern about the water sharing across areas like Nottawasaga over to Georgian Bay in terms of watersheds. Crossing watersheds is something that's going to be allowed by this particular bill, which is a dangerous piece of legislation

in terms of dealing with it in our area. As the member that was representing the town of Innisfil and also Bradford West Gwillimbury when we were dealing with the issue of trying to get water down from Georgian Bay, from Collingwood, through purchasing it through Alliston, we weren't able to do that. So Bradford West Gwillimbury had to look for their water from Lake Simcoe, and that being from Innisfil, to the tune of millions and millions of dollars.

Now we're faced with tremendous growth pressures in our area and a government of the day that has really no plan for our area, leaving it irresponsibly open to a shortage of water and of sewage capacity because of what they're doing by exempting it from the green belt—with no plan.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm delighted to be able to briefly respond to the comments of the member from Timmins-James Bay because water taking is a big issue in my riding. My municipality of Guelph is dependent on ground water, and water taking from the Grand River watershed is a significant issue. We also have a number of water takers, including water bottlers, breweries, gravel quarries, limestone quarries—so quite a big issue in my riding.

I'd like to make it clear that one of the things that is in this bill is requiring a permit to take water for any use over 50,000 litres per day except domestic use, municipal use or livestock watering. The things that we've heard about this impacting on private wells just aren't true. Those are specifically exempted in the legislation.

However, a thing that is new in the legislation—when we're looking at the commercial and industrial permits to take water, which is what we're really talking about here—is something that, again, will be very well received by my constituents because it gives the Ministry of the Environment the ability, which they do not have in the legislation at the moment, to look not just at the quantity of water that is being removed but, if it's being returned, the quality of the water as it's being returned to the watershed. When you've got gravel extraction and other processes where there's a lot of pumping but then the water is ultimately returned, the quality of the water being returned is, in fact, a significant issue.

I'm looking forward at some point in the future to also be able to speak more about this bill, because it is of importance. But it is a big step forward in managing our water assets in Ontario.

Mr. Miller: I am pleased to add some comments to the speech from the member from Timmins-James Bay on Bill 198. The member from Timmins-James Bay spoke at length about the De Beers diamond mine which is opening in his riding, west of Attawapiskat. Certainly, that's a very important project for all of Ontario but especially for his riding in northern Ontario.

He talked about the new tax that this government just pulled out of the box in the last budget, which was very

much a surprise to De Beers, the company that's developing this \$1-billion new diamond mine. It's the first diamond mine in the province of Ontario and, unfortunately, as the representative from De Beers said at the Meet the Miners reception here recently—it may be the last and only diamond mine that ever develops in the province of Ontario because of the Third World taxation policies that this government is bringing into effect. He went on at length about how surprised the company was to have a tax brought in just as they're about to go into production on this new mine. All of a sudden the rules of the game were changed. They made all their plans based on the stable tax rates in the province.

He communicated with his head office that we had a stable government here and then the government, at the last moment, pulls a fast one on the company and changes the rules of the game. That's not the way to encourage economic growth and jobs in northern Ontario and for the whole province, and I think it's very unfortunate that this government has decided to change the rules just as this important project is about to come into production. That was very clearly expressed by the representative of De Beers at the Meet the Miners reception recently here at Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Timmins-James Bay has two minutes to reply, if he chooses to do so.

Mr. Bisson: I do, and I will be very short because I know members are pressed for time. I thank the members for all their comments. The thing on the De Beers thing that I find quite astonishing is—I understand this as a New Democrat. I don't understand why the Liberals don't get it. You would think it would be us who wouldn't figure this out. All of us in the caucus understand that if you change the regime in the way that you're doing it, you're going to lessen the ability to attract future investment in mining.

Mining is such a capital-intensive business that, by the time you invest in the exploration industry until you bring a mine, you're literally talking billions of dollars. Who's going to spend billions of dollars if they think you have a tax regime or jurisdiction that is basically Third World or, as De Beers said, "a bit of a banana republic"?

These people will pay taxes. De Beers is prepared to pay taxes, but the point we're making to you is that the loss you're going to get in future investment will by far wipe out the money that you're going to raise within this particular royalty. I just say to members, to the Premier, the finance minister, the minister of mines: You're going to have to rethink this one.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 p.m. this evening.

The House adjourned at 1759.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

Loi de 2007 modifiant la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée (président de l'Assemblée), projet de loi 208, <i>M. Kormos</i>	
Adoptée	8068

Loi de 2007 modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation (discipline progressive et sécurité dans les écoles), projet de loi 212, <i>M^{me} Wynne</i>	
Adoptée	8068

Loi de 2007 reconnaissant la langue des signes comme langue officielle, projet de loi 213, <i>M. Parsons</i>	
Adoptée	8068

DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

La sécurité dans les écoles	
<i>M^{me} Wynne</i>	8069
<i>M. Klees</i>	8071
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Charte canadienne des droits et libertés	
<i>M. Bryant</i>	8070
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No. 158B

N° 158B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 17 April 2007

Mardi 17 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 avril 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 SUR LES ESPÈCES EN VOIE DE DISPARITION

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 3, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 184, An Act to protect species at risk and to make related changes to other Acts / *Projet de loi 184, Loi visant à protéger les espèces en péril et à apporter des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Beaches–East York.

Applause.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I hope everyone's still clapping when I finish. I realize I have about 20 minutes.

This is a bill—I started to do some research today. Although I had the opportunity, sitting in the Speaker's chair, to listen to some of the debate earlier, I had not really turned my head to what I was going to say, but we had a wonderful opportunity in the last hour, those who availed themselves of the Environmental Defence Fund, which was—

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): What were you?

Mr. Prue: I'm going to get to that—which was downstairs. They had a wonderful reception where they invited members of this House to come down and try to adopt or be one of the animals, the birds, the trees, the flowers, the reptiles that were in need of protection in this province. In fact, they had 103 such species that they find at risk. They had a card to go with each and every member of this Legislature. They would only give five cards, but through my adept trading and cajoling I was able to get a number of cards to describe the various members of this Legislature, and I think it behooves me to talk about not only the environmental defence of the animals and the species that are at risk in Ontario but also some of the members who are described and associated with them. I want to take my hat off to Environmental Defence and everything that they try to do. It was one of the most novel receptions that I, as a member of this Legislature, have ever had the opportunity to attend.

Some of the cards that I was able to collect—and I put the Liberals first, the Tories second and the New Democrats towards the end, but—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: No. They seem to have captured the personality of some of the people around here. I don't know who did the research, but I commend them.

The member from Brampton West–Mississauga is the environmental defence for the Shumard oak. I thought, "This is a kind of a silent guy who stands there tall and sometimes alone." There it is, and he's a Shumard oak.

The next one was the member from Mississauga West, who is a golden seal. We often, in this Legislature, accuse members of the backbench of being trained seals, but he is in fact a golden seal—

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): A trained golden seal.

Mr. Prue: He is a trained golden seal. He seems to have been captured quite well.

There is my colleague in the adjacent riding of Scarborough Southwest, who has been equated with an eastern rat snake. I don't know whether that's particularly fair, but that's what they chose for him.

We have the member from York West, who was determined by them to be a hooded warbler. I think that's probably true, because he does stand up and chirp from time to time.

There is, of course, the member from Essex, whom I am so proud to see here tonight. He is a blue racer. I think this comes from his wonderful bow ties that he wears. He has certainly distinguished himself in this House and is equated with a blue racer, which seems to be a very large snake found in southern Ontario and Pelee Island. Of course they did the research, because that's where he is from.

1850

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Mike Colle: the woodland vole—

Mr. Yakabuski: Colle the vole.

Mr. Prue: Colle the vole. And this has a habitat across southern Ontario. I don't ever remember seeing too many voles, but I do know that Mr. Hudak—the member for Erie–Lincoln—told me that he has a lot of those around his property.

We have Mr. Duguid, who is a blueheart. I always thought he was more of a redheart, but they have him equated as a blueheart.

We have the member for Ottawa–Orléans, who is an eastern ribbon snake. That's from Georgian Bay to eastern Ontario—of course, that's where he's from.

Now we go into the Conservatives. We have the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock—

Mr. Yakabuski: She's a snake.

Mr. Prue: Yes, yes. She is an eastern hog-nosed snake, from southern Ontario to Lake Nipissing, which of course takes in the riding of which she is the member.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Well, no. I think that the picture here of the eastern hog-nosed snake does absolutely nothing for the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, who doesn't look anything like that at all.

We have the brand new member from Burlington, Joyce Savoline, who is a hoary mountain mint.

Mr. Yakabuski: A what?

Mr. Prue: A hoary mountain mint, which is in southern Ontario—

Mr. Yakabuski: I guess she smells good.

Mr. Prue: She smells good.

We have the Leader of the Opposition, who is an eastern wolf. This is around the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence region. He is suffering from threats of habitat loss, hunting and trapping—no doubt brought about by his many travels in Ontario.

We have my colleague and my friend here from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, who is a Kirtland's warbler in southern Ontario, which is suffering from habitat loss and parasites. Perhaps that is his close proximity to me; I don't know.

Now we get into some of the others. We have the member from Lanark–Carleton, who is a five-lined skink from southern Ontario, who is suffering, of course, from habitat degradation and poaching because people are actually out trying to grab him.

We have the member from Nepean–Carleton, who ought to be the most honoured of the lot, because she is referred to as the grey fox.

I only got two New Democrat cards. I got the card for the member for Toronto–Danforth, who is said to be a bird's foot violet, which is found across southern Ontario. Habitat loss and trampling—because people are trampling all over him. I don't know whether he appreciates that, but that's what was said.

Last but not least, I actually got a card of myself.

Mr. Yakabuski: No.

Mr. Prue: I did, indeed. It is Michael Prue, from Beaches–East York, the least bittern. This is habitat loss, degradation and pollution from which he suffers. That's what a least bittern looks like.

I really want to commend the members of Environmental Defence, because they brought home, to the 103 members of the Legislature who were able to go there, 103 animals, birds, trees, flowers, rodents, reptiles and amphibians that are under considerable risk. In fact, we know that there are many, many animals, birds and wildlife that are under considerable risk in this province. We know, from the record, that 40% of all of those species that are at risk in Canada are at risk in the province of Ontario. We know that over the last 20 or 25

years, literally thousands of species across this planet have become extinct.

There was a television ad that we all saw a few years ago: "Extinct means forever." It means that when an animal, species or bird becomes extinct, they are no more. It is a huge loss to our planet, it is a huge loss to humanity, it is a huge loss to everything in this interconnected world we have when a species no longer exists. The rate of extinction is growing faster and faster with human development, with global warming, with urbanization, with pollution and with all of the other things that come with that.

We have had some success stories where governments have gone in and tried to do appropriate protections. Some that come immediately to mind are whooping cranes, which 50 years ago were on the verge of extinction, with only eight left. We're all the way up to 120 or 130 of them, although this year was particularly calamitous when the whole new flock that was born, save one, died in a freak thunderstorm in Florida. It was pretty sad when that happened. But it is about 120 or more birds today, and that is a success story.

There is, of course, the success story of the pandas in China and the peregrine falcons here in Ontario. I remember looking up in absolute awe last year when a pair of peregrine falcons was nesting on the front of the legislative building. I don't know how many people had an opportunity to go out and see that nesting—

Hon. Mr. Peters: They're back.

Mr. Prue: Are they back? I haven't seen them.

Hon. Mr. Peters: They're hawks; they're red-tailed hawks.

Mr. Prue: No, I'm sure there were peregrines last year. Anyway, to see the kind of thing where a species is at risk and it comes back to an urban environment right here on the legislative lawn and right here on the building was absolutely amazing and wonderful.

We see, and this is a paradoxical thing, a species that 10 years ago was hugely at risk and today is hunted, I think sometimes possibly to the point of extirpation, and that is the cormorants that exist around Lake Ontario and around the Great Lakes. There are people, including members of this Legislature, who are out to extirpate them. It was only 15 or 20 years ago when they were almost extinct. They are a native species. I remember as a boy seeing them for the first time, seeing them fly over the waters. They fly very low to the waters in a V formation, sometimes only a few centimetres off the actual waves. They are amazing birds to watch. But there are people who think that these magnificent animals should be extirpated. In fact, in Ontario that is what is happening. There is a bill before this Legislature to cull them. There is a bill before this Legislature to kill them because they aren't the prettiest bird in the world and their guano and what they do on the islands does cause some degradation to the islands. But I would say that if we are to protect the species, if we are to look to the natural environment, we need to look to protect those birds which were once endangered and not extirpate

them, as this bill so readily warns us of doing. We have others, but I'm mindful of the time because I spent far too long talking about the good cards.

The reasons that the animal species and other species are being extirpated in Ontario are very many and complex. It's the degradation of the land, it's the pollution, it's the urbanization, it's the highways and it's the global warming. There are a thousand things that can cause this, and the reality is that it's human beings who are causing it. It's human beings in our many numbers, whether we intend to do it or not, who are causing this, and by pesticides and farming as well. Many animals that once flourished are no longer here.

I am happy, I will say for the record, to support any bill, including this one, which will stop extinctions. I am happy to support any bill, including this one, which will help us to restore the habitat and help us to restore the many animal and plant species that exist on this planet, and particularly in Ontario. I am happy to try to keep forever the many species of wildlife and the heritage that we enjoy here in Ontario and that we need to preserve for all Canadians and, indeed, all mankind.

In supporting this bill, and I will be voting for it at second reading, I am doing so in the full knowledge and expectation that the government will order committee hearings so that people can come forward and try to make a good bill better. We're not saying that it's not a good bill, because it is a good bill; we are saying that this good bill can be a better bill, and there are only a couple of things that need to be done. The first and foremost is that we need to consult with the First Canadians in this province. We need to go north of the 51st parallel to those aboriginal communities that occupy most of the land that is outside of the urban area, and we need to discuss with them the contents of this bill.

1900

I heard on this weekend, Friday or Saturday, that the Minister of Natural Resources will be flying to Thunder Bay and will be meeting with some of the groups of aboriginal Canadians to talk about this bill and what it means. It's better late than never. Quite frankly, we had an obligation, and we indeed have an obligation at all times, to consult with the First Nations of Ontario, and in Ontario we have a far greater obligation than just what is right and moral. In Ontario, we are the signatories to a treaty that was signed 101 years ago with the aboriginal communities north of the 51st parallel, Treaty 3, but especially Treaty 9, which Ontario as well as the federal government signed to ensure that the aboriginal communities would be protected in their way of life and in their environment. We have not lived up to that treaty. We have not consulted when we should have consulted. We have not gone in there and seen what they can do to help us make this legislation work.

So it is better late than never that the minister is going to meet with them, but quite frankly, this bill cannot succeed in the great land mass of Ontario unless the people who live there, i.e., the aboriginal communities, are onside. We have an obligation to consult with them

and to do what is right so that they too can be stewards of the land and can protect our flora and fauna.

We have an obligation to look to our farmers. We have an obligation to do what is right by them. I can only quote, being a guy from the city, what some of the newspapers have to say about this very deal, because it does not appear to me that the farmers in northern Ontario have been serviced particularly well by this government in terms of what—I need to find the quotes; oh, here they are—this government has or has not done. I have two quotes, one from the Sudbury Star and the other from the Thunder Bay Chronicle, which I want to read into the record because I think these two newspapers have said what needs to be done and what has not been done to date.

I quote first from the Sudbury Star of Monday, March 26, 2007, where they wrote, "While the legislation is necessary, it still could fall short in one area.

"Landowner stewardship has been recognized in the legislation with conservation easements and tax incentives, but there is no mention of compensation.

"Farmers and landowners stand to lose revenue if an endangered species is found on their land. Preserving the species' habitat could likely mean a loss of crops or other products as well as grazing land ... the government still has time to consult with agriculture and landowner groups.

"That is the only way to ensure the species at risk legislation will become a law that produces results in a way that is fair and equitable to those on whose lands the animals might be found." These are very telling, careful and good words from the Sudbury Star, Monday, March 26, 2007.

The second statement, which comes from the Thunder Bay Chronicle, echoes the problems of northern Ontario and those northerners who live outside of most of the urban areas of our province. It says, and I quote the editorial in part, "Legislation that is aimed at protecting vulnerable animals and plant species across the province, could unduly restrict logging and mining activities and further jeopardize communities in crisis in the north" and "the act could lead to immediate and indefinite moratoriums on any resource-based activity, and could add more red tape for a forest industry already in crisis." They go on later in the editorial to say, "Besides more consultation to do so, we propose that the new act include provisions for crown land exchanges when issues of protection arise. If protection of an endangered species results in a ban on logging or mining in an area, then the province must release an equal amount of wilderness to replace the area protected."

People who earn their livelihoods on the land need to be protected, whether those are aboriginal communities, whether they are people involved in the mining and forest industry, whether they are farmers. I am asking the government to listen very carefully to any of the constructive criticisms that might be made. We all have an obligation to protect those species. We all have an obligation to make sure that they do not go extinct. We have an obliga-

tion to ourselves and to our children and to generations yet unborn to make sure that the wonderful place that is Ontario continues to be that way. We cannot and we must not let anything stand in our way, save and except the duty we have to consult these people and save and except the committee process that must—in the fulsome debate that flows from it, to listen, to learn and to act.

That would be the time I have. I will be supporting this legislation, but I am very hopeful that this government will do the right thing in terms of committee work and in listening to the people to make a good act even better.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. David Orazietti (Sault Ste. Marie): It's a pleasure to respond to the comments from the member for Beaches–East York. I'm certainly pleased to hear the support of nature in tone and that we have all-party support for this piece of legislation that is moving forward. It's great to see.

We all know that it has been 36 years since this legislation has been updated; 1971 was the last time that it was, and we have only 42 of the 176 endangered species currently protected in the province of Ontario. This is a very important piece of legislation, a very necessary piece of legislation. I hear the members opposite. We are listening. The consultations are going on. I can certainly tell you that tomorrow I will be in Kingston listening to groups present at a round-table meeting. On Monday, there were some sessions in Windsor, and the consultations will continue.

I also want to point out that about a year ago, in May 2006, we consulted widely with key landowners, conservation organizations, aboriginal communities and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario through newspaper advertisements, the Environmental Bill of Rights and so on. Aboriginal consultation began on May 10, 2006, when by-mail invitations were sent to First Nation and provincial tribal organizations to participate in the discussion paper.

Those discussions have been going on for some time. There is a lengthy list that I have here of the First Nation organizations that have been contacted and that we've been gathering feedback from. We're going to continue to do that right through the process. But I think we all agree that the legislation needs to be changed; it needs to be updated. We're falling well behind.

The other thing I would point out is that the federal Species at Risk Act, 2004, is part of the national accord. Provinces were required to step up to the plate and deliver on legislation. So we're going to be fulfilling our federal obligations as well.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): Certainly, when the Endangered Species Act was brought in, it was by a Progressive Conservative government back in 1971. What's unique about this particular bill, not only that it's regulation-driven in terms of how this is going to be put together, is that the member from Sault Ste. Marie was talking about consultation. Usually you do the consultation before you bring the bill in. Here we

are in second reading, and what you do is debate in second reading. Then you go to public hearings, which the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has been asking for, public hearings to deal with this across the province in a very instructive way to get meaningful impact, because the member from Beaches–East York, to my left, has been talking about dealing with people whom we should respect in terms of how they're going to be significantly impacted—native Canadians, farmers and the people in the mining industry—in terms of the impact that they have.

1910

I had a meeting a couple of weeks ago with the Simcoe County Christian Farmers Association in Barrie at the Northwest Barrie United Church. They expressed their concerns because they were up on the bill and everything, but the fact is that they hadn't been consulted. They were trying to figure out how this bill was going to work because there is minimal protection in terms of their stewardship program for people who are impacted by the bill. If they are affected by a particular species that's on their property, how is the government going to deal with this? The government hasn't funded this. They haven't thought it through. They're consulting as they go along here because they're embarrassed because they did not consult on this particular bill.

The bill could have been done through a white paper. It could have been done through a consultation process before you draft it, or go out after first reading. Here we are at second reading, and they're still consulting.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It gives me great pleasure to make a few remarks about my friend and colleague from Beaches–East York, who brought an engaging debate into the Legislature tonight. I don't know whether that debate was as a result of his passion for the issue or whether it was the fact that he has been designated by Environmental Defence as the honorary protector of the least bittern. When I think of my friend from Beaches–East York—and I'm sure all members would agree—Environmental Defence was very clever in their alliteration when they gave the member for Beaches–East York the least bittern to be the honorary protector of because he's a very affable member. He's someone everyone gets along with. So to consider him to be a least bittern I think absolutely wonderfully clever, and I congratulate them on that. I also congratulate them on the reception they had tonight, which was a very clever and engaging way of getting members into their reception to talk about this very piece of legislation as well as the frightening number of species, whether they be plant, animal, insect, rodent or reptile—whatever we want to specifically identify, but there are very many of all of those types of species that are endangered in our province. It was a very engaging way to have members participate in the discussion, and very timely, indeed, that the bill is being called for debate tonight.

I want to thank the member for Beaches–East York for his engaging debate, not only in terms of the reception but also acknowledging that there are some concerns

with the bill and indicating that the support is there as long as it's going to be addressing some of the issues that we raised.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): To pick up where my colleague from Hamilton East left off with her remarks on the member for Beaches–East York: If he is indeed the least bittern, I wonder who the most bittern is.

I noted that a fair number of my colleagues were reptiles and snakes and I wondered whether or not they clustered in any party. I must give the Environmental Defence people this: They didn't seem to cluster in any party. However, just for the record, they had me listed as a golden seal, which was very nice. It was nice to know as a goaltender that as a golden seal I was part of the Original Six expansion franchises.

With the Endangered Species Act, 2007, it notes that of the 30,000 species here in Ontario, some 175 are at risk. If one takes these very helpful cards and turns them over, you very quickly get an idea of what it is that causes species to be at risk and where these species are that are at risk—a fair number of them in the Great Lakes regions. Where their habitat is threatened it seems to be deforestation, habitat loss, weather. It shows us that in the type of modern society that we're creating, we have to be very mindful that in our zeal to improve the lot of all Ontarians we don't inadvertently find that we're destroying some of the species that make Ontario unique and make it truly one of the most blessed places on earth.

I truly hope this act passes very quickly and urge all members to support it.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: I would like to thank the members from Sault Ste. Marie, Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, Hamilton East and Mississauga West for their comments.

To the member from Sault Ste. Marie, he has said what the government has said before—and I thank him again for that—that this will be going to committee and that there will be some extensive consultations taking place over the next weeks and months in order to make the bill—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: I'm going to get to you, too—in order to make the bill better. I wish some of the consultations had taken place earlier, particularly those in the NAN community and Treaty 9 in northern Ontario, because it seems to me that every time we attempt to deal with First Nations, every time we attempt to deal with our autochthonous peoples, we do so as an afterthought. We do so after the bill has been put forward rather than doing so in consultation before. But it is better late than never, and I am mindful that the minister will be meeting later this week.

To my colleague the member from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, he has talked about consultation. He is absolutely right: The consultation needs to take place, and it needs to be ongoing. It could have been done earlier, as he suggests, but again, I am thankful that it is being done

nonetheless. Even though it could have been done earlier, it could have been done more often, it still is being done.

My colleague from Hamilton East talked about the wonderful reception. I want to reiterate her words. It was one of the best receptions I have had in my nearly six years here. It was fun. It had us involved. It had us looking at most of those species, quite frankly some of which I had never seen. Although I think of myself as a great fisherman, there were fish on there I had never seen before.

My friend from Mississauga West is absolutely right: Oftentimes the extirpation, the elimination of the species takes place and we are not even mindful that we are doing it in our zeal to have a better province. We need to take a really close look.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): It's of course a privilege, honour and duty to speak on Bill 184, as you will know last actually updated in 1971, so certainly it's about time.

I'll declare at the beginning that I'll be sharing my time with the MPP from Ottawa Centre, the honourable Richard Patten.

As you know, Bill 184 is about innovation, sustained protection and, of course, it's scientifically grounded. I'd like to welcome the support and also the remarks which are always colourful from the member from Beaches–East York.

As a somewhat city-bound individual who may not have the most natural resonance with a lot of the species that are being named, I have to tell you, though, that in a scientific or medical capacity, we have the utmost respect for biological diversity and the number of species that our planet is heir to, because from my perspective, those species not only add to the chain and the circle of life but are often a source of medicine and new drug developments. So with that, I can certainly appreciate this particular bill.

As well, you will appreciate, with the kind of ongoing extinction of a number of these species, this is perhaps actually a marker for the human world as well. I think it's our obligation in the Legislature to hand over to our children, including young Ontarians like Chamsa Qadri and little Shafiq Qadri who I know are watching right now—we, as stewards of the environment, have to hand to them the full complement of what Ontario has to offer.

Some of my colleagues from the opposite side have talked about time frames with regard to this bill being brought forward, but I have to say that they've had eight years combined on the Tory side and five years previous to that, so 13 years' total, and no update, no initiative, no measure, no program was really brought forth in this realm.

Bill 184 is part of the McGuinty vision. For example, the Ministry of Natural Resources budget, up by 6.4%, \$44 million.

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Now, let's have a look at what some of our outside stakeholders, interested players, watchers of the environ-

ment actually have to say. For example, Dr. Rick Smith, the executive director of Environmental Defence, writes, "The new Endangered Species Act is a significant step forward for Ontarians and the natural heritage we all value so highly. This new legislation will provide an inclusive, science-based and effective framework within which to balance different environmental and economic priorities."

Bill 184 is part of an overall mandate of environmental stewardship: as I mentioned, the Ministry of Natural Resources budget increase, the Ministry of the Environment budget increase of 12.5%, our greenbelt legislation, the Clean Water Act and so much more.

In particular, Speaker, as you'll appreciate, as was mentioned earlier, something like only 42 of the endangered species of the 175 are on this list, and this is a very important part of our natural heritage which we as stewards of the province—flora, fauna and the rest—really are entrusted with taking care of over the years.

This particular bill is about innovation, sustained protection and I think is a win for not only Ontarians and for the environment but for all parties here, and no doubt that's part of the reason why it's warranting all-party support. With that, I'll pass it to the MPP from Ottawa Centre.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Thank you to my colleague from Etobicoke North for his thoughtful comments.

Let me begin by paraphrasing an aboriginal thought, and that is: When we lose a part of the web of life, we move closer to threatening our own survival. Of course, that's not our orientation in life, especially the western orientation in North America, especially the urban orientation. We look at other species—animals—as something to shoot, something to eat, something to stuff once we've shot it or something to enslave as pets. I'm somewhat culturally ashamed to say that, but frankly it's kind of that attitude. If there's something that's an exotic species, endangered, the immediate response of a lot of people is, "Well, I can get some money for this. I can sell this. Someone else will take it on as a pet."

So it seems to me we have somewhat of an historical neurosis related to others in our universe. Perhaps it goes back to the concept of dominion over the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea and animals of the land etc. that this arrogance related to other species and other life forms is the characterization of dominance rather than our feeling that we are part of life, part of the universe, part of the planetary scheme of things and therefore that requires an essential respect of other living forms. I believe our aboriginal brothers and sisters help us with that, because their relationship, as they see it—their spiritual leaders and elders talk about their relationship to the birds of the air and Mother Earth, and they will talk about the wind and they will talk about the phenomena. But the animals are cohorts, coexisting on this particular earth in an inter-related web of survival.

I'm fascinated—just briefly to mention a few examples. There is a movie—I forget the actual name of it, but it has to do with sharks; I haven't seen it, but my daughter was telling me about it—that was talking about how endangered sharks are. Because of that, and their role in the sea as probably one of the dominant predators, that of course changes the whole sequence, the chain reaction, of the other species in the ocean. All of a sudden you have an abundance of those fish and crustaceans that are eating what's on the bottom of the ocean. It's created an imbalance, and whenever we have an imbalance, there's a threat to the environment.

I find it interesting that there was an article—I think it was in today's paper—called, "What's Killing Niagara's Bees?" It's not often that one puts one's head back and contemplates bees, unless you're a parent and you want to talk about the birds and the bees with your offspring because it's a timely thing to do so. But other than that, one is not too inclined, generally, to do that. But I thought, "Wow, what a powerful statement." The article is from the Toronto Star. It goes on to talk about the threat: "—up to 90% in some ... colonies—has prompted Ontario beekeepers to ask" university "experts ... to investigate" this particular move.

I was reading some of the statistics on this: "It takes one colony of honey bees (around 30,000 bees) to pollinate an acre of fruit trees. Pollination success increases if there are more honey bees present at the time of peak flowering.

"The value of bees pollinating fruit, vegetables and legumes is 10 times the value of honey produced (more than \$1 billion in Canada)." That's an economic analysis, but the point is that we forget the role played by various insect species, animals and fowl.

There was another article earlier this week that talked about the reduction of songbirds that are coming home, back north, having wintered in the southern United States or Mexico. What that means: It's not just the vacant sound of a bird. They all play a role: in the nature of the insects, in the eating of mosquitoes and of certain insects that affect trees. Without those birds playing that particular function and being interrelated, those trees now become susceptible, so an imbalance occurs.

I thought today that the Environmental Defence organization, which had an opportunity to welcome some MPPs this afternoon, was quite creative in what they said, as you heard from some of the members. They identified some species that were at risk and even put some members' names related to some of them, that they theoretically would be fostering the protection of these endangered species. I thought that was very creative. They're asking that all parties consider this.

This will be going to committee. This is one of the bills, in my opinion, that one day—I hope when we reform the Legislature. I will be the first to applaud when we reform this place. We will have the best thoughts taken to ameliorate what's here. My understanding is that we've got at least two parties, if not the better part of three, that support this because it relates, in a selfish

sense, back to us. When we threaten other species, we actually threaten life as we know it. We threaten the balance of life, and we threaten ourselves as well.

I leave my colleagues with the particular thought that this is a pretty serious piece of legislation. It's more than just the others that are out there, meaning the birds and animals of the forest and the air. It has something to do with an essential, spiritual respect of life.

I will sit down, on that particular note, and ask some of my colleagues to consider that in the best sense of the term.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I'm pleased to comment on the speeches from the members for Etobicoke North and Ottawa Centre, and also the previous speech from the member for Beaches–East York, on Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act. Both the member for Ottawa Centre and the member for Beaches–East York talked about our aboriginal communities. What we in the PC Party are pushing for is for people like the aboriginal communities to be heard on this bill. So we are pushing in the strongest way we can for there to be public committee hearings that travel around the province, if possible. I, as the critic, have made myself available to participate. Whether it be constituency week or Fridays or whenever, it can be arranged. That's what we're asking for, and every day I keep receiving letters and e-mails from groups asking for that; they want it. They support the bill, but they want to see public hearings.

Just recently, from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture:

"Dear Mr. Miller:

"The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, representing the interests of over 38,000 farm family members and businesses across Ontario wholeheartedly supports the protection and recovery of species at risk. However, we do have serious concerns with a number of provisions within the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007.

"We have also heard from a broad spectrum of organizations that they have not had sufficient opportunity to voice their perspectives on and concerns with the Endangered Species Act, 2007.

"The OFA believes the act will have deleterious effects on our farm families who earn their livelihoods from their property. Although sound farming practices may be significantly disrupted through restrictions on property usage, the act does not provide a commitment to compensate farmers for such restrictions."

I don't have time to read the whole letter; perhaps, if I get another opportunity, I will. But that's from Geri Kamenz, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. That's just one of many groups that I've heard from. Most support the act but they're all asking for the same thing, and that's full committee hearings with public consultations across the province so they can have their concerns heard.

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure as well to make a few remarks on the speeches by the member for Etobicoke North and the member for Ottawa Centre. I want to say that I really appreciate particularly the remarks from the member for Ottawa Centre. I think he has made some quite insightful comments about the importance of legislation to protect our endangered species. I agree wholeheartedly with many of the remarks he made, particularly as he illustrated the tie-in between the various types of species that are under threat. Even in our own newspapers today—and I believe he spoke about Niagara bees particularly, as well as songbirds that are supposed to be coming back and apparently are not coming back in the numbers expected. So there is a very real illustration of the kinds of situations that we face even right now in terms of the changing way that our environment is adapting to or reacting to the environmental footprint of the human species and the way that it is crowding out all other species.

I too agree with him that the gathering downstairs was a very positive and lighthearted one, but the issues are extremely serious. I would hope, though, that the government will heed the illustration that the member for Ottawa Centre from their caucus gave in regard to First Nations in indicating how we can learn from First Nations in terms of their relationship to the natural world, and I have to say that this government needs to heed First Nations in its attempt to put together legislation on endangered species. If they don't, it could be to the peril of First Nations, and that certainly would not be something that anyone in this House would support.

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I'm pleased to stand this evening to make a few comments with regard to the comments of my colleagues, and the word that came out that I want to address is "coexistence." That's the whole idea behind an act that will address our endangered species. We all know, of course, that whatever the species might be, right on up the chain from the very smallest to mankind itself, once gone, it's gone. We have to work together to protect these endangered species.

The cards that we received this evening at the reception for the environmental defence—I think in many cases it's not a coincidence. Mine happens to be the blue racer snake. On Pelee Island—that's in the middle of Lake Erie and in my riding—the blue racer snake is a significant endangered species. What we have had to wrestle with over the years is the co-existence with development. I think it can be done, and we're close to that. The folks on Pelee Island want this piece of legislation passed because it does allow for us to manage habitat and retain those endangered species at the same time as we manage development.

So I'm most anxious, along with my constituents on the island, to have this act passed. I agree that we should get as much input from those who have had experience over the years with these species and those who have positive comments to make on the legislation through committee work.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to respond to some of the

comments that have been made by the members for Etobicoke North and Ottawa Centre and indeed all of the speakers who have made comments on the Endangered Species Act this evening. I think all of the comments that have been made have been very thoughtful, reasonable comments that reflect the importance that preserving endangered species has to all of us. I think we all recognize the importance that we place on this particular subject so that we can protect these species for our planet generally and for generations to come.

The only caveat I would offer here is that we need to ensure that we hear from all of the voices that will be affected by this legislation, particularly the First Nations people, as has been noted, who have a particularly close affinity with the land, and our farmers, who also have a close affinity with the land and who will be directly impacted by the terms and conditions of this legislation. So I would only urge the Minister of Natural Resources and the government to ensure that we have proper consultations with all of those parties who will be directly impacted by this legislation to ensure that the legislation at the end of the day is properly balanced and will achieve the objectives for which it was intended. If you only embark upon a review of a piece of legislation of this nature every 30 years—and it has been since 1971 when the act was first introduced—I think everyone concerned on both sides of this House wants to make sure that what we end up with is something that's going to serve the best interests of society, of nature and of all concerned.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Patten: I'd like to thank the members for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Hamilton East, Essex and Whitby–Ajax for their comments. I have a few comments in reaction to some of those.

I appreciate the ardent fervour of the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka asking for full consultation etc. I'm not sure whether, in the length of time we have, that will necessarily happen throughout the province, but there will be an opportunity here. There are other consultations that will take place, as has already been identified, and there are some consultations that have already taken place that make part of the mix. So I would hope that for those who felt they were cut out, there would be an opportunity one way or another, whether it's actually coming here to Toronto or through some kind of teleconferencing, for those voices, through letters, through depositions or position papers, to do that. So I say that to my friend from Parry Sound.

To my friend from Hamilton East, I acknowledge her identity with the concerns we have for the species around us and how they have an impact. I certainly accept her suggestion that we listen very carefully to First Nations or aboriginal people, who, on this particular issue, I think, have a lot to say and have a lot to teach us.

To my friend from Essex, who talks about coexistence on Pelee Island and the challenges on Pelee Island of various things—he didn't mention the cormorants, but I

know that's another challenge there in how you balance things.

My friend from Whitby–Ajax, in terms of taking the long term, listening to farmers, listening to First Nations people: I hope we all have the propensity and openness to do that.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm pleased to join the debate tonight on Bill 184, An Act to protect species at risk and to make related changes to other Acts. In keeping with what my friend from Beaches–East York, better known as the least bittern, began earlier—where are my glasses? That is not going to work very well. Anyway, we'll have to try and wing it without them. He was talking about the Environmental Defence group that was here tonight. I had a chance to speak to Rick Smith, the executive director—I think Bob Delaney took them—about the reception.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: Thank you very much.

It was a fine reception. It was very interesting with regard to the attaching of a species at risk to each member of the Legislature—and the least bittern to my friend from East York. I just wanted to run over a couple more. The finance minister is the honorary guardian of the Jefferson salamander. The member for Perth–Middlesex is the honorary guardian of the queen snake. The member for Oakville is the honorary guardian of the silver shiner. The Minister of Community and Social Services is the honorary guardian of the red-headed woodpecker. She's somewhat red-headed; it's maybe a little bit more blondish. The Minister of Culture is the honorary guardian of the dense blazing star. It's a plant.

Hon. Mr. Peters: How did you get so many cards?

Mr. Yakabuski: I traded.

Interjections.

Mr. Yakabuski: Yeah. We won't get into how he got them.

The Speaker for this evening, the member for Waterloo–Wellington, is the honorary guardian of the wavy-rayed lampmussel. Myself I'll leave for last.

The member for Trinity–Spadina is the honorary guardian of the cerulean warbler, and he does sing a pretty good song in here from time to time. There's no question about that.

Ms. Horwath: Are you jealous?

Mr. Yakabuski: Yes, I am at times.

Myself—as the Minister of Natural Resources said when he looked at this, “Oh, you're a diseased tree”—I am the honorary guardian of the butternut.

Hon. Mr. Peters: Beautiful tree for furniture.

Mr. Yakabuski: Yes. But an interesting exercise nonetheless, and I think it is important to draw attention to species at risk. When you look at the big picture, who is going to be against protecting species at risk here in Ontario or any other jurisdiction? It just would make no sense whatsoever, because none of us, nobody, wants to see any species that the good Lord has put on this earth leave this earth when we have some way of ensuring that

that doesn't happen. I do know that, through history, many, many species have become extinct that have had nothing to do with anything that man has done, but we certainly play a big role in it today.

So when you look at the big picture, the goal is laudable. What is missing here on the part of the government is not the goal but the implementation, the exercise, if you want to call it that. This bill probably should have been brought to this Legislature a year, a year and a half, two years ago. In that case, the government wouldn't be in such a hurry now to rush it through prior to the end of this session, because as we know, when this session is over, this House is proroguing, and any bills that are on the order paper are going to die if they're not passed into law.

Now, of course, the government has a need to move post haste to try to get this legislation passed and approved. However, if they had moved more quickly in their mandate—let's not mince words here; they've been in power for almost four years. They had ample time to bring this piece of legislation forward. If they had moved more post haste at the beginning of their term, we wouldn't be in a situation today where we've got all kinds of groups who are very concerned that the government has failed with regard to proper consultation on this bill and proper opportunities for those who are affected, perhaps negatively, by the implementation of this bill, to bring their concerns to the government to be discussed and considered with regard to possible amendments and/or implementation of this bill.

Earlier today, I presented a petition in the House. The petition is with regard to the lack of consultation. You have to recall that this government promised—there is that word again—promised to hold consultation wherever legislation could have a significant impact on the public. This does have significant impact. And what are we getting for consultation? Well, we're hearing that the minister and some staff are going around travelling, and they're going to have some interviews, and they're going to have some chats. These are hand-picked people that they're going to chat with, by invitation only. That's who they're going to see. They're not opening this up to the public. That is no substitution for proper legislative committee hearings. Legislative committee hearings are what the people have come to expect on a piece of legislation, and they should expect no less on this legislation.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): We're going to be out there consulting with the people.

Mr. Yakubuski: The member for Peterborough says, "We're going to be out there consulting with the people." Where might that be? And where might those committee hearings be held? It's not by when the minister decides, "I'm going to go out and have a few conversations over a cup of coffee with people that I may already know."

Why are we not having public hearings? Take the issue to the people. Don't force them to come to see you. Take the issue to the people with an all-party committee of this Legislature. That should be what we're doing with consultation; not minister's staff or whomever going out

and chatting with these people and coming back and saying, "We've had consultations."

You see, I had this petition dropped off to my house last Saturday by a group of people who are very concerned about the lack of consultation. Renfrew county council, the representatives of all the municipalities in the county of Renfrew, have expressed serious concerns about the lack of consultation on this bill. They've also expressed serious concerns, as others have, about the lack of compensation. If you truly believe that a piece of legislation, any bill, whatever you may make of it, is in the best interests of our society, of our province, everybody in the province, then I think you also have a responsibility to attach to it, for those people who will be negatively affected by the bill—the possibility exists with the farming community, the forest industry, other industry, private landowners, all kinds of people who could be negatively impacted by this—some form of compensation for loss of use or loss of revenue. There is nothing here.

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Again, they've rushed this bill out, because we're near the end of a session. This is another one of these rural-urban wedge issues that this government has become so adept at, because this is not going to be a contentious bill in downtown Toronto—in fact, it's going to be very well supported by people who come from Toronto or other large urban centres—but the lack of consultation and the lack of compensation does mean it's going to be a contentious bill in rural Ontario, because those people feel that their concerns have not been addressed.

If this bill is exactly what we need—and I concede that it is an improvement over what we have, and I think it is high time. I do, in some way, congratulate the government for dealing with this, but they're way behind; they should have done it a couple of years ago so that it could have been properly discussed throughout the province. I do agree that legislation has to be updated from time to time, and this act is no exception. In many ways, it is an improvement over the current situation. But having said that, in your haste to have this as a campaign piece of wedge material, you've not given it enough time to allow the people to properly make input on it.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario—representing every municipality in the province of Ontario—with the exception of Toronto, which has pulled out of AMO—has grave concerns about the bill for those very reasons.

So I say to the government that if you're pleased with this bill and you believe it addresses all the concerns and covers all of those bases, then why won't we take it to the people? Why are you afraid to take it to the people? It's almost like today, when the Premier is afraid to go before a legislative committee, the estimates committee, to table information and expenses incurred through his office. Why would anybody who has nothing to hide be afraid to come before any committee of this Legislature? That's what I say to the government: If you're comfortable with this bill and you feel you've got it just about right—and I

recognize you have conceded that you are willing to make amendments where that is necessary and we appreciate that—if you feel good about the bill in general, why are we not willing to take this bill to the people?

This is a vast province: 458,000 square miles. I have not converted it to kilometres. But 458,000 square miles is the size of this province. You can't hope to get true input on a bill of this nature, which clearly affects rural people more than it affects urban people, because we're talking about wildlife and we're talking about wild plants and flowers. I think it's a fair assessment that it affects rural people far more. You can't get to the rural parts of this province by having a telephone conversation or the minister and his parliamentary assistant shuffling off to Kingston to meet with some hand-picked people who, quite frankly, are probably going to be quite supportive of the bill. I accept and appreciate that.

But if you really want to have true consultation in a province the size of Ontario, you've got to get out there to where the people are. You've got to get out to northern Ontario and eastern Ontario: Renfrew county and Lanark and Hastings and Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and down in the Bruce and areas like that. You've got to get out to the people. You've got to get up to Nipissing and Sudbury and Timiskaming and all of those places. You've got to get to the people who are most affected by this kind of legislation in their home quarters so they can bring their concerns, not to the minister and not to the parliamentary assistant—

Mr. Leal: He's a good guy.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm not saying he's not. What I'm saying is that they need to be able to bring those to an all-party committee of the Legislature so that members of all parties can also ask questions—I need that; well, maybe I don't; I need the glasses—to determine how this bill affects them negatively and what can be done to improve it.

The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka took those glasses again. Maybe he wants me not to read the stuff I have.

Mr. Delaney: No, I didn't take your glasses.

Mr. Yakabuski: I wasn't accusing the member from Mississauga West; I was only suggesting that he may have absconded with them temporarily. It could be a trick.

Where was I? So that those people have a chance to bring those concerns, not just to a Liberal member or a Liberal minister but to an all-party committee of the Legislature, so they can speak freely.

I did want to read a couple of things for the record.

Mr. Miller: Here you go.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm just going to borrow these. This is one fancy-looking pair of glasses—pretty tiny.

“Ontario mayors, business call for endangered species consultation.

“Mayors from across Ontario are joining the growing number of political, business, industry and non-government associations calling for the Ontario government to take a sober, second look at Bill 184. The bill is being championed by environmental special interest groups but

viewed with growing concern by the people who work with the land”—work with the land—“say members of the Ontario Forestry Coalition that represent municipal, forestry, business, labour and First Nations interests.” I think that's the key phrase there.

I'm not going to read the whole letter but, “Mayor of Greenstone and president of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, Michael Power, says, ‘Now that we've finally had a chance to look at the bill, not just a framework posted on a government website, we now know that, as written, it has the potential to drastically affect our businesses and our communities.... So far, it appears the government isn't going to allow the people of Ontario to have a say,’ he adds.”

Well, I've got to believe that this government wants the people of Ontario to have a say. In a democratic society, I don't think we'd ever want to shove any kind of legislation through without ensuring that the people who are most affected by it have a say; not just the people who accept that the protection of species is a laudable goal, as most people do, but the people in the urban areas would not recognize the need to consult with people who work with the land, as I say again. But this government knows that. This government knows that those people who work with the land have to have a proper opportunity to be consulted.

Again, let us not lose sight of the importance—you put up \$18 million, I believe. Is it \$18 million?

Mr. Miller: Over four years.

Mr. Yakabuski: Over four years, \$18 million. That's \$4.5 million a year in a province that's 458,000 square miles large. That is simply not enough. If you're going to say to these people, “If we take an action as a government because we believe it is imperative for the protection of species, and if part of the reaction is that it has a negative affect on you, someone who works the land and draws a living from that land, then we're going to compensate you, we're going to support you,” that kind of stewardship fund is a drop in the bucket, as they say. That's just not going to cut it.

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I think that that's what these people need to hear from this government, a government that has increased spending by \$22 billion a year since taking office, and now is going to spread across a province 458,000 square miles large a thin, little veneer of \$18 million to cover all of the effects that this legislation could have. That's not enough. That's not enough for these people to be able to sit back and say, “Okay, we recognize and we need and we believe and we accept and we share the feelings that species have to be protected.” But those who lose their livelihoods as a result of legislation have to be protected too, and an \$18-million veneer just won't do it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to make a few remarks on the speech by the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. I have to say that a number of the comments he raised I would agree with, particularly when he described how important it is to have bona fide

consultation. Again, I understand there are members on the government side who are saying, "Well, we have this member going to talk to this group and that member going to talk to that group." That's really not appropriate in terms of the context of our trying to have a kind of democratic process around the moving along of this bill and its consultation requirements.

I'm a little bit disturbed to think that members of the government side would think that that is good enough. In fact, the process that is undertaken in the committee and in the context of committee work, whereby all members have an opportunity to hear from various stakeholders on pieces of legislation, is the very least that a bill of this import should be subject to. I have to say that it's those very discussions and those very comments that come to light during those public committee hearings that really do lead to significant insights and oftentimes significant amendments that the government is willing to accept, particularly when there is vigorous discourse at the committee level around those potential amendments and what might happen should those amendments not be put into place.

So I don't think committee hearings are necessarily anything to fear. But I certainly do agree with the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who puts on the record the fact that consultation appropriately is through the public hearings process and that's where it needs to happen. I know my own leader has been concerned about that issue, as have other members of my caucus, and I look forward to making a few remarks on it myself very shortly.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I'm delighted to take a couple of minutes to make some comments on the comments that the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke made. Let me first assure the member, who focused a lot of his time on the lack of a consultation process on this bill, that to the best of my understanding—and I know some people who were able to take part—they've been consulting for a year. No, they were not public committee hearings, but the fact is, they've been out talking to people. I know that some people from my riding attended as part of this process to come up with legislation.

The other thing that I must tell the member—he keeps saying, "We need some public hearings." I think the parliamentary assistant, the minister and other members from this side of the House made it very, very clear that we are going to have those public hearings. So let's talk about the legislation; let's not talk about—

Mr. Yakabuski: Here.

Mr. Rinaldi: The member says they're here. Yes, they might be here, and that's not established yet. But even if they're here, I think that's 100% better than what they did. They had nothing. There was no consultation. They were specialists in omnibus bills. So it's hard to understand that it's never enough consultation as far as they're concerned. But I find it very hard to understand how they can say that when they didn't know what the meaning of "consultation and public hearings" was.

Having said that, we have consulted, we are consulting with stakeholders as we have this debate in the House, which is fresh in people's minds, and then we are going to have hearings. The fact that we're going to protect endangered species is not a novel idea, but it hasn't been done since 1971, I believe. So this government has taken it upon itself to renew and refresh the legislation to bring it up to date.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I just want to follow up on the one message the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke pointed out: that the need for hearings and citizen participation is so important with legislation like this. I haven't met anybody who has attended hearings anywhere. I'm calling not only for consultation but also for information sessions. We think of the kind of displays the Ministry of Natural Resources can set up to let people see photographs of the prothonotary warbler, the puff adder and other species that have been identified.

This issue of consultation is very important in rural Ontario, very important for farmers and landowners. I just received a letter from Geri Kamenz, president of the OFA, dated April 12: "The OFA believes the act will have deleterious effects on our farm families who earn their livelihoods from their property. Although sound farming practices may be significantly disrupted through restrictions on property usage, the act does not provide a commitment to compensate farmers for those restrictions. The act also provides broad entry powers which potentially threaten biosecurity controls."

I own a farm. I've grown up on a farm. Nobody has any business walking around on someone's farm, walking behind someone's buildings. In fact, if you're down in the Caledonia area, any staff person or bureaucrat who decides to do that these days is actually taking their life in their hands, given the very touchy situation in that part of Ontario.

For these reasons, the OFA requests standing committee hearings. They want these scheduled. They want to enable closer public scrutiny of the act, to ensure that its potential impacts are known. They also want to provide amendments that may well be necessary. Let's open it up.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I just want to point out to the members of the assembly that I, like others, attended the reception today that was given in regard to a particular group that was here. They gave me a card, and I'm a polar bear. I thought that's pretty fitting, considering I'm kind of a—

Ms. Horwath: You're the honorary guardian of polar bears.

Mr. Bisson: I'm the honorary guardian of polar bears, as my colleague says, being the member for Timmins–James Bay. There are only two members in this assembly who can boast of having polar bears in their ridings, and that's me and Mr. Howard Hampton, the member for Kenora–Rainy River. I've got to say that polar bears are a majestic animal, and I think it's quite fitting that I became a polar bear. Other than being that warm, cuddly

little bear that I got last year from Christina Blizzard, I'm now the white bear.

In regard to the legislation, I just want to say that we, as New Democrats, support the intent of this legislation. My only concern is that I wish the government would take a bit of time in committee to try to get this thing right.

I've had an opportunity to talk to a number of people since the legislation was tabled. A lot of people have looked at it from both sides: those who support it and those who support it but also have some concerns. One of the things that has started to come out in discussions I've had with different individuals is that there's a real fear that the way this legislation is written, we may end up in litigation in regard to a number of aspects. Some examples have been given to me that I thought were somewhat distressing. I don't know if they will actually end up going there at the end of the day, as far as the intent, but I think what's important is that the process we follow in this assembly should always be one that tries to draft legislation that at the end of the day does what it's supposed to do without having adverse consequences. All I can say is that nobody in this House—nobody—doesn't support the intent of being able to protect endangered species. All of us believe we need to do that, because we understand that this is about the heritage of our children and grandchildren. But we also owe it to each other to make sure we do it right. I would hope that we can get to committee to try to fix some parts of this bill that I think need a little bit of fixing.

The Acting Speaker: I return to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments of the members from Hamilton East, Northumberland, Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant and Timmins–James Bay.

I just want to reiterate what I said and respond to the comments primarily by the member from Northumberland, who talked about their consultation process. Going out and having these little meetings somewhere behind closed doors does not constitute public consultation. A committee of the Legislature—those records are public. Anyone can see what those people had to say. The conversations and submissions are public. Is the minister going to be tabling the accounts of these meetings, these consultations, with this Legislature? Not likely.

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I think it is very important too that people out in television land know the distinction. These are not little private tête-à-têtes. Committee hearings are public. They are recorded in Hansard. Everything that everybody says is part of the official record, and if you want to have proper public consultations, that is what constitutes it. It's not the minister going on a little junket through the province so he can come back and say, "I've done my due diligence." That is not enough. That's why these stakeholders are concerned. They want to know what's being said, they want to know who's saying it, they want to know where it's being said and they want it to be said

throughout this province. It's not about bringing people to Toronto. It's about taking this bill to the people.

And don't forget compensation—the member for Northumberland never touched the issue. Eighteen million dollars spread across this province is a pretty thin coat of wax, and that is not enough to ensure that the people who lose as a result of this implementation are fairly compensated.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Horwath: I would be remiss if I didn't take a few moments at the beginning to share with members who I got in my cards today from Environmental Defence. I have a number of members in my little selection. By the way, if any members want to do some trading, I'm certainly open to that, although I'm also going to let you know about some of the members I didn't get but whom someone else has allowed me to borrow. I'll go through them.

I have the member for Sudbury and Minister of Northern Development and Mines, who is the honorary guardian of the bashful bulrush. He is responsible for the bashful bulrush. The orangespotted sunfish is the creature that I am the honorary guardian of; the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, of course, is the guardian of the butternut, a tree that he has already mentioned. The Minister of Labour was joking earlier that that particular tree makes great furniture. Interestingly enough, that's probably why it's on one of these cards, because it's being made into too much furniture and no longer exists very well as a tree because we've been using it for furniture.

I also have the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, who is the eastern hog-nosed snake's honorary guardian. I have the minister responsible for democratic renewal, and the plant that she's the honorary guardian of is the deerberry. I have the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, and he is the American badger's guardian. I have the finance minister, and he's the Jefferson salamander's guardian. I have the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and she is the eastern yellow-breasted chat. That's a double. I have doubles, so I do have trading capability, particularly with my doubles.

I have the Attorney General, and he is the guardian for the northern bobwhite. I have the Speaker—not this Speaker, unfortunately, but the Speaker of the House—and he is the guardian of the wolverine. I have the member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge, and he's the guardian of Hill's pondweed. The Minister of Health is the peregrine falcon's guardian. The member for Niagara Falls is the American water-willow. And the new member from Burlington is the honorary guardian of the hoary mountain mint.

I wanted to thank my friend Graham Murray from Graham Murray Research, who provides Inside Queen's Park, which we all get, because he loaned me his cards so that I could read out more members and their honorary responsibilities.

I also want to read directly from the information piece that was provided by Environmental Defence, because I

think that one little paragraph in here outlines really clearly why this is important legislation and why, as my friend Gilles Bisson and other members of my caucus have indicated, we are very supportive of updated, upgraded, new endangered species legislation. Of course we have some concerns around consultation and other issues, but we do think it's the right thing to do.

Ontario needs a new Endangered Species Act now. Here's what they say at Environmental Defence:

"Ontario is home to nearly 40% of all of the endangered species in Canada. Most of Ontario's endangered species continue to decline. For those species for which trends are known, over 75% are either already gone from Ontario or are on their way to disappearing.

"Fewer than 25% of the endangered species in Ontario receive protection under the current and outdated legislation."

I think that's a very succinct way of describing the crisis, if you will, in endangered species protection in Ontario at this point in time.

I did want to mention that attending the gathering that Environmental Defence put on this afternoon and this evening brought to mind for me the amount of debt we, as legislators, as people and as communities in Ontario, have to people in our communities who are active on environmental issues. I think that all of us know that many of these people are volunteers. Many of them don't get paid for the hours and hours they put in. The passion they show is unbelievable. The work they put in is unmeasured. It's just massive amounts of work and dedication that environmental activists put into the volunteer hours and the work they do for the purpose of protecting our environment. Whether that is through endangered species activism or other activism, the bottom line is that I think we owe a great debt and a great deal of gratitude to the people who are participants in environmental initiatives in our communities.

I thought I would use that as a bit of a segue to talk about some of the things that are happening in my own community in regard to environmental protection and particularly in regard to endangered species and endangered habitat. It was through being elected to city council, when I was a member of city council in Hamilton, that I became much more aware of, much more educated on and much more engaged in some of the environmental issues that face the city of Hamilton. Of course, the ward I used to represent at that time and that I love so much, ward 2, was the home—at least part of it—to major initiatives that were ongoing and that many members may be aware of, which is called a remedial action plan. Hamilton Harbour is a very polluted hot spot in the Great Lakes, as many people know, and so along with many other communities in Ontario and in Canada, remedial action plans have been put in place to try to turn around the degradation of the environment that has occurred in those areas. The purpose of the Hamilton Harbour remedial action plan is "to bring about sustainable natural ecosystems in Hamilton Harbour and its entire watershed, and to improve the potential for more extensive

recreational uses while maintaining the harbour's and the watershed's essential economic function."

The vision of the remedial action plan is that, "People living in the harbour's watershed have a vision of Hamilton Harbour as a vibrant centrepiece in their community's life. They look towards a time when the environment will be balanced, friendly, accessible, clean and humming with diversity. They see the pleasure of recreation mixed with prosperity from use of the harbour as an essential marine transportation link. They hope that what is a vision for them will be a reality for generations to come."

I hearken back to the member for Timmins-James Bay's remarks when he talked about the fact that this endangered species legislation is not just about us here in the day, but also about the generations to come—our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren—and the legacy we leave behind in terms of the richness or lack thereof of our species that walk our earth, swim in our ponds and grow in our fields and forests.

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The remedial action plan is a plan that is undertaken by a number of stakeholders; the stakeholders are called the Bay Area Implementation Team. That team has a number of member organizations, because again, it's not a matter of the work of one organization or group, but many, that accomplish some of these major changes in the way that our environment is being addressed: the Bay Area Restoration Council; the city of Burlington; the city of Hamilton; Conservation Halton; Dofasco; Fisheries and Oceans Canada; Environment Canada; Hamilton conservation authority; Hamilton Harbour RAP office; Hamilton Port Authority; Hamilton Waterfront Trust, of which I used to be a board member; McMaster University; Ontario Ministry of the Environment; Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources; the regional municipality of Halton; the Royal Botanical Gardens; and Stelco Hamilton. You'll notice some major industry players as well, and the remedial action plan group has been able to engage a number of our industrial partners in the efforts around the remedial action plan and the remediation of Hamilton Harbour.

There are two particular groups that I thought it was important to talk about in the context of endangered species and the work that's happening in Hamilton around endangered species. One is the Bay Area Restoration Council, which is a partner in the remedial action plan. I want to raise them because the Bay Area Restoration Council is largely a volunteer-based group that has been working tirelessly to assess and promote the cleanup and projects of cleanup for the Hamilton Harbour and its watershed. They work with all of the partners described in the previous remarks around the RAP, but also they have a vision that sees a multi-use harbour that balances vibrant and diverse ecosystems with opportunities for recreation and the economic engine of our region. So you'll see that their mission is very similar.

The Bay Area Restoration Council is a group that has worked so, so hard in Hamilton to see the vision of the remedial action plan come to life. They are constantly undertaking projects, seminars and efforts to turn the harbour around. People say, "What is the big deal with Hamilton Harbour?" The bottom line is that the harbour has been misused and abused significantly over the industrial history of Hamilton, and now it's starting to come back because of the efforts of some of these organizations. But it has not been a pretty sight over the years to watch the marshlands, particularly at Cootes Paradise, deplete and deplete until finally there is very, very little marshland at all. The biggest problem was an invading species that was spawning in the harbour—in Cootes Paradise, actually, from the harbour—called the carp. The carp is an invasive fish that was going into the Cootes Paradise marshlands and basically destroying all the other fish and the habitat that the other fish needed to survive. So the Royal Botanical Gardens has been working diligently on something called the Cootes Paradise fishway, and we're now in a situation, very proudly, where a number of fish are being identified as having come back to the harbour after so many years of the RBG's work with the fishway. The fishway basically stops those carp in their tracks and prevents them from spawning in Cootes Paradise and prevents the invasive nature of that fish from further destroying the harbour marshlands. In fact, it says here—and this is from the RBG website:

"Decline and Recovery of Cootes Paradise:

"Once nearly 100% covered by emergent and submergent aquatic plants, the extent of marsh vegetation has declined to 85% cover in the 1930s, and to only 15% in 1985. A variety of stresses were responsible for this decline. Human development and farming in the watershed contaminated the marsh's tributary streams with sewage effluent, eroded soil, and chemical runoff. Within the marsh, carp activity physically damaged and destroyed the marsh plants. Carp activity and eroded soil from the watershed also muddy the marsh water, limiting light penetration and plant growth. Controlled lake water levels and the introduction of non-native plant species have also disrupted marsh ecology. For the restoration of Cootes Paradise to be successful, RBG and other partners in the HH-RAP agreed that an effective carp control program and pollution abatement programs in the watershed were necessary."

I'm telling you, if you have a chance in spring to go to the fishway, it is absolutely amazing to watch the work that gets done there in Hamilton at the fishway with the RBG fishway project.

Interestingly enough, when I picked up the RBG website, because I knew when this endangered species issues was coming that there were a lot of issues in Hamilton that were directly related to this bill, I was surprised to see that one of the first things that came up was in regard to the efforts that the RBG makes, and this is why the government needs to fund the RBG appropriately. They're not just the Royal Botanical Gardens

where people go and see wonderful gardens—they are, but guess what? The Royal Botanical Gardens works on protecting endangered plant life, growing endangered plant life and making sure we continue to have rich plant life in the province that would otherwise be endangered. Please, please, it's not just a matter of passing a bill like the Endangered Species Act; it's a matter of making sure that appropriate funding accrues to organizations like the RBG that are primarily and scientifically involved in endangered plant life and in this other project that they're working on with the fisheries, the marshlands, as well as the ecosystems that are involved with the marshlands, including of course the fish and the other aquatic vegetation and animals that exist around there.

But I was starting to say that the first thing I came upon was this indication that the Sunfish Pond embankment restoration project is another project they are undertaking: Sunfish Pond embankment. Well, lo and behold, my card says that I'm the honorary guardian of the orange-spotted sunfish. Now maybe "orange-spotted" has something to do with my political affiliation, which I think is, again, very clever of the group. Nonetheless, I think one of the other members was talking about the fact that none of this is coincidental, in terms of the species that particular members were honorary guardians of, or identified as honorary guardians of, because they do have a relationship back to the members' ridings. And you know what? I have so many things here that I wanted to share with the assembly tonight in regard to what is happening in Hamilton.

Today there is an article—and coincidentally, right? Today, coincidentally, in our Hamilton Spectator, there is an article that says, "Residents Fight to Save Turtle Ponds." These turtle ponds are not in my riding, particularly; they're in the riding of the member for Stoney Creek. But what this says is, "A group of Stoney Creek residents are trying to stop development of townhouses on land once designated environmentally significant to save a rare, blue-spotted salamander found there." I want to know who in this House is the honorary guardian of the blue-spotted salamander, because we might be enlisting your aid in Stoney Creek to guard against the possible destruction of the habitat of the blue-spotted salamander, which is in jeopardy because of some strange—some would say perhaps too strange—situation where there was an accidental lack of notification of a particular school board and then, lo and behold, all of a sudden, this is no longer an environmentally sensitive area. So here we are now: The school board is going to try to sell the land and allow development, and lo and behold, the blue-spotted salamander and the blue-spotted salamander's habitat, being the turtle ponds, is at risk.

Every single day in Ontario, more and more species become at risk because we're not doing the right things or we're not doing the things that we need to do to protect them from extinction. Yes, I ask the government: Make sure you're thinking about this not just in the context of your bill that's before us today, which we all hope can be amended and passed in this Legislature, once

it gets to a form that's reflective of the wishes of all stakeholders involved, but you need to fund organizations like the RBG, and you need to be careful about the kinds of approvals that are being provided for organizations to simply, at the stroke of a pen, have the loss of, the non-existence of or the disappearance of environmentally sensitive areas, designated environmentally sensitive areas.

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Other members have spoken about the lack of funding, for example, to the Ministry of Natural Resources and the fact that a lot of the enforcement levers or the enforcement opportunities, whether it's for this bill or others, rest with the Ministry of Natural Resources. If you're not funding that ministry appropriately—again, there has been some significant criticism of a slash in funding to that ministry's budget by this government. So it's not good enough to just have the trappings of the legislation. You need to really put your money where your mouth is and you need to put your commitment to the test when all of these issues are coming up with the government.

I want to finish by indicating once again that there is no doubt that myself, personally, and the other members of my caucus are looking forward to having updated endangered species legislation in this province. But once again, it's important to remind members on the government side that there are a number of stakeholders who are legitimately concerned about the lack of consultation that has occurred. The need for public hearings is significant. I would urge you to ensure that you're really taking the time to engage First Nations, particularly. As well, other members have mentioned the issue of people who make their living off the land. Yes, that includes First Nations. It also includes people from rural and farm communities, as well as resource extraction communities, I'm sure.

So if all of these are brought to the table, I think all Ontarians would agree this is important legislation. But let's get it right, let's fund it appropriately, and let's make sure we're doing everything in every aspect of this government's work to make sure species are no longer endangered.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Oraziotti: It's a pleasure to add a couple of comments to the remarks of the member from Hamilton East. I certainly heard the opposition members this evening making some very constructive comments on Bill 184.

I think we're all in agreement that we need to pass this legislation. It's long overdue. Both the Conservatives and the NDP had the opportunity to raise this issue, to move forward on this issue, and it certainly didn't happen on their watch.

I also want to address the issue around funding. The Ministry of Natural Resources budget, 2003-04, was \$541 million; today it is \$726 million. That's an increase of \$185 million. This year alone, the Ministry of Natural Resources budget was increased by \$44 million or 6.4%. I know the opposition likes to play games with one-time forest firefighting money. But the reality is that the base budget to the Ministry of Natural Resources has in-

creased from \$541 million to \$726 million—\$185 million—under our government.

This bill is something that we need to move forward with. The last time it was updated was 1971. It has been 36 years. We are not capturing all of those species that we can in terms of protecting their habitat and our ability to ensure that they become and stay part of Ontario's legacy. Only 42 are on the endangered species list out of 176 species.

This is also a piece of legislation that needs to move forward to meet our obligation under the national accord. The Species at Risk Act, the federal legislation, was passed in 2004. As part of that agreement, provinces needed to live up to their end of the bargain and they haven't done that. We're doing that.

Consultation is ongoing. We're certainly going to have hearings here at Queen's Park. I'm going to be in Kingston tomorrow for some stakeholder consultations, and we look forward to hearing the feedback.

Mr. Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech of the member from Hamilton East on Bill 184, but I first of all will comment on the comments of the member for Sault Ste. Marie to do with the MNR budget.

I have the budget right here before me. It shows that the interim spending last year was \$762 million. It's \$726 million this year. That's down \$36 million. His defence of that is that there was one-time forest fire spending last year. Well, from what I hear from the reports up north, this year is looking worse than last year. How do you know how many forest fires there are going to be this year? Do you have a crystal ball, for crying out loud, that you know there are not going to be any forest fires? All the clippings show there is less water and the forest fires could be worse this year than last year, so it's a very poor defence.

Getting back to the Endangered Species Act, what we're pushing for on this bill is consultation. I've heard from so many groups that want to be heard on this bill. Here's one: the Ontario Property and Environmental Rights Alliance. They say, "However, in our view, the subject act as now proposed reflects a worthwhile initiative betrayed by a questionable process and dire consequences for another endangered species: Ontario's rural taxpayer. An appointed advisory panel where citizens directly affected by the proposed Species at Risk Act were not represented endorsed this legislation and reported little or no meaningful public opposition to same." I've heard from so many different groups on this legislation, whether it be the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Northwestern Ontario Sportsmen's Alliance, the Ontario Fur Managers, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters—who pointed to the federal act and showed the audit that was recently done on the federal act and how we could learn a lot from that—the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and on and on. That's just a partial list of all the various groups that are concerned about having their say on this bill. So I say to the government, listen to them.

Mr. Bisson: This cold of mine is going to get me yet.

I just have to say I agree with the previous comments you were making in regard to the MNR budget. The government says, "Oh, you can't predict forest fires." That's exactly the point. They basically lessened the budget of the MNR this year. Last year, we know that in fact there were fewer forest fires than there were in previous years, and they're telling us that you can't make any predictions about what forest fires are going to be, yet they're trying to say—it's such a convoluted argument.

Anyway, back to the legislation.

My, this is really bad. My voice is sounding as it did about 40 years ago.

Ms. Horwath: A second childhood.

Mr. Bisson: It's my second childhood. That's what happens when you turn 50, but that's another story. By the way, did you know that it was somebody's birthday today?

Ms. Horwath: It was.

Mr. Bisson: It was, and we're not going to say who. It wasn't a caucus member—but that's another story. Laurie Orrett turned 50 years old today. Laurie Orrett, chief of staff for Michael Prue, turned 50 today.

Ms. Horwath: She's going to love you for announcing that.

Mr. Bisson: I just thought I'd put this in the House so everybody knows. I'm going to send her the Hansard tomorrow, and she isn't going to talk to me anymore.

Ms. Horwath: Men are so sensitive to these issues.

Mr. Bisson: I'm going to be 50 on May 14, and I'm proud of it—that I've been able to be on this planet as long as I have and turn 50. It's a milestone; imagine that—and I have a 30-year-old daughter. Anyway, I'm off topic, Speaker. Please bring me back to the topic.

The topic is the legislation. I want to say a couple of things. I thought the member for Hamilton East laid out quite well what some of the issues are and talked about it from the perspective of her community. This is the point that I want to make: It's all local. We understand that at the end of the day, no matter where we live in the province of Ontario, this issue is going to affect us one way or another. I think this is the point: We want to make sure that we get it right. I think all members of this House owe it to future generations and quite frankly to the current generation to take our time in committee to make sure that we get this legislation right so that we can protect local habitat when it comes to animals and others.

Mr. Crozier: The debate tonight is an interesting one. I think there are a lot of good points being made. The member for Hamilton East has added to this debate in a positive way. It's kind of interesting, when you think about it, that we're all in favour of this kind of legislation. But isn't it kind of a crime that in a perfect world we wouldn't need this legislation—but we do, because there are people out there, there are some in our society, who wouldn't give a darn about a plant, a bird, a tree, a snake

Mr. Bisson: A polar bear.

Mr. Crozier: A polar bear, yes. There are some similarities there. But there are some who would not do anything to protect the species. Why do we have endangered species in the first place? Because we haven't looked after those that share our environment.

You know, I've not been a raging environmentalist in my lifetime, but you think about it, and you know, these birds, these animals, the flora, the fauna, all have just as much right to exist on this planet as we human beings do. Sometimes I think we forget that. We think that we're here to make money, to use up all our natural resources. Some day, as I said in earlier comments, we might be the endangered species if we in fact don't do the kinds of things that we're discussing here this evening.

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The Acting Speaker: I'll return to the member for Hamilton East.

Ms. Horwath: I want to thank the members from Sault Ste. Marie, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Timmins–James Bay and Essex for their remarks. One of the things I was thinking about, particularly as the member from Essex was talking, is how easy it really is to just add that little bit of attention span, to broaden people's attention spans a little bit and get support in communities for initiatives that are aimed at protecting various endangered species. Certainly, in the context of debating this bill, I think we're all becoming more enlightened, those of us who have not had an opportunity to engage in any of these discussions or think about these issues. But we know that there are many people in our communities, as I mentioned in my earlier remarks, who are very engaged. If it weren't for them, I don't think we would even be debating an Endangered Species Act at all.

Some of those people in my community—I think off the top of my head of John Hall, who has been very active with the RAP in Hamilton; Anne Redish; Marilyn Baxter. I know people from the city of Hamilton who were very involved as well; in fact, staff now at the Waterfront Trust who are very involved in that work as well as the Parks Department at the city. So it's volunteers and NGOs and governments, all of these groups together that can truly make a difference for us.

As I mentioned, the remedial action plan particularly, in Hamilton, is one of the areas of concern of the Great Lakes water quality agreement between Canada and the United States, and there are some 43 areas of concern. Hamilton Harbour is one of the areas of concern, and I only hope that as we put this legislation in place through the debate, we also look at other threats to that particular area of concern. I know there are really big jobs we need to do around Randall Reef and other issues we need to look at, and I look forward to working with the government to resolve those as well.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): It's a pleasure to participate in tonight's debate on Bill 184. I'm going to disappoint members of the Legislature and perhaps those watching at home by saying that unfortunately, I didn't have a chance to make it to the reception tonight.

For those tuning in, they should know that an organization, Environmental Defence, had a reception tonight for members of provincial Parliament, where they presented a series of cards where each one of us has been assigned an endangered species. It sort of has become the norm tonight to stand up as you begin your speech and say which one you represent. Unfortunately, I don't know which endangered species I represent, but I do want to congratulate Environmental Defence for the work they do in raising the profile of this issue and bringing home the importance of it.

Indeed, I stand here tonight to speak in support of Bill 184, as so many other members have this evening. If passed, I think we're safe to know that in Ontario we would have one of the strongest pieces of species-at-risk legislation in North America. I stand here tonight in support of this bill not simply because it's a government bill and I'm a member of the government party, but because of the commentary that has come forward from two groups. The first I think are some key stakeholders and experts in it. Just to share a couple of quotes—because it's been noted tonight, a few people have said there isn't general support for it. Well, I think there is among some of the key players in this. Environmental Defence, I mentioned earlier, are having a reception here tonight for members of provincial Parliament. Aaron Freeman, the policy director, had this to say: "We thank Minister Ramsay, Premier McGuinty and the clear majority of Ontario residents who support this new legislation. By working together, we can make sure our natural heritage is protected for all time."

Rob Wright, counsel for Sierra Legal, had this to say: "If passed in its current form—and Ontario deserves no less—this will be the best endangered species law in the country."

Wendy Francis, the director of conservation and science for Ontario Nature, had this to say: "The new stewardship fund accompanying the bill will help ensure that the costs of protecting rare plants and animals do not fall solely on landowners."

I could go on with the list of stakeholders who have come out to congratulate us on the bill and the process leading up to it. But, as I said, my support for the bill is not only because experts and leaders in this field have come out in support of it; it's also because I represent a community—as do so many; I think all members in this Legislature—where the environment is increasingly becoming a matter of concern.

In my community of Waterloo region, one of the big issues we face is growth. Although growth should be welcomed, although growth leads to prosperity, and in the case of my community is being accompanied by great prosperity, at the same time everyone wants to make sure that that growth occurs in an environmentally friendly way and a way that is sustainable. I think that from this government you have seen measure after measure, whether it's the Clean Water Act, whether it's Bill 198, the Ontario water resource act which we debated earlier today, or the climate change plan that's going to be an-

nounced by the government shortly, or the work that has been done by Minister Caplan on the Places to Grow Act to make sure that there isn't urban sprawl. We've seen an approach by this government which says that growth and prosperity can go hand in hand with environmental stewardship, and I think Bill 184 builds on that.

The key point I think about Bill 184, to maybe respond to some of the comments that have come across from members of the opposition this evening, is about the consultative nature leading up to it. As has been pointed out by other speakers, this is the first overhaul of the legislation since 1971. I think there was an awareness amongst all stakeholders in Ontario that it was sorely out of date and that we had to work to move forward. The type of consultation that did take place in putting forward this legislation was wide-ranging. We heard from members of the public, aboriginal organizations, land developers, environmentalists, rural communities, municipalities and the resource industry sectors as we set out to come forward with a plan of how we wanted to move forward.

Now we have a bill in place, a bill which I'm pleased to see seems to have a fair amount of support on all sides of the Legislature, and the government is committed to moving forward with consultations at the committee stage, which are going to complement what happened in the lead-up to it.

Again, you don't have to take my word for it. This is Richard Hibma, the chair of Conservation Ontario, who had this to say: "Conservation Ontario commends the government of Ontario for undertaking a review of the Endangered Species Act which will result in improved protection for species at risk." And this is the key point: "The province led a very inclusive consultation process during the review and the conservation authorities were pleased to participate."

We've heard from stakeholders—certainly I've heard it from my community—the importance of this type of legislation, which has been complimented by so many other members, by this government. I applaud it. I look forward to the committee hearings to make sure that we hear again from a wide range of stakeholders and take their views into account. I stand here tonight in support of the bill and urge all members of the Legislature to join us in making sure that Bill 184 is passed as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Elliott: I appreciate the opportunity to comment briefly on the remarks made by the member from Kitchener Centre. As he was, I was also unable to attend the gathering sponsored this afternoon by Environmental Defence. So I too am not quite sure what endangered species I'm meant to represent, and I'm a little bit afraid to ask. But, perhaps, if somebody knows, they could enlighten me at some point later on this evening. I would like to add my comments to the points that he has raised and also the points raised earlier by the member from Hamilton East with respect to the need that we have to thank the members of our local communities who have contributed to environmental protection over the years

and who have devoted so much of their time and energies to it.

I would just like to comment briefly on several of the organizations in my local community that have been instrumental in preserving some of our important wetlands that, of course, support both the flora and fauna that depend on it; that is an environmental movement started some years ago by the Save Lynde Marsh group and also by the Friends of Second Marsh, who have done a lot of really important work to preserve our natural environment for all the residents of our communities.

Even though we all live pretty far from the natural world in our daily lives now, I think that most of our fondest experiences and memories are related to some of the experiences we've had in our natural surroundings. I can say that some of my fondest memories, that I remember quite vividly with my three sons—who are now virtually grown up—were as a Beaver leader and a Cub leader some years ago, going on some outings with some of the children and noting the delight that they took in the natural surroundings. I think it brings home to us how important it is that we work together to preserve and protect our natural surroundings for our children, our grandchildren and for generations to come.

2050

Ms. Horwath: I want to remark to the member who spoke from Kitchener Centre, and I just have to warn some of the members from the government side who are buying the line that there has been extensive consultation—I hearken to remarks that I was hoping to be able to bring into my speech earlier today from the member from Timmins—James Bay when he got an opportunity to speak to this bill. Here's what he had to say: "I've gotten all kinds of letters from First Nations and others, from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, from the Ontario Forestry Association, from numerous—and I've got to say 'numerous'—First Nations tribal councils and others in PTOs, who said they've really not had a chance, for the most part, to be able to talk to the government about any of this."

Then he goes on to list a number of individuals—Mike Carpenter, the chief of Attawapiskat. He speaks about Whitewater Lake First Nation, which wrote him a letter saying there had been no consultation: "So here's Whitewater First Nation basically saying, 'We've had all kinds of meetings with MNR, and never at any time, in any of the meetings we had with MNR, did somebody raise this whole issue of species-at-risk legislation.'"

He then goes on to talk about Wapekeka First Nation; he talks about the Independent First Nations Alliance out of Sioux Lookout, representing Big Trout Lake, and the list, unfortunately and disturbingly, goes on and on. So please be careful; don't just buy the lines that you get in your briefing notes. The fact of the matter is there are legitimate concerns about lack of consultation on this bill, and we just want to see that that's going to be addressed. I'm hearing from government members that it's going to be addressed through a hearings process, and I'm very pleased about that.

I want to end off by saying to the member who was speaking earlier about community groups—we too have many in Hamilton. I think just off the top of my head of Environment Hamilton, the Hamilton Naturalists' Club, Friends of Red Hill Valley; we have numerous groups and activists who work on these issues daily, and they need to be thanked.

Mr. Qaadri: As you'll be aware, Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act, is about innovation, sustained protection, it's scientifically grounded and of course it's intelligent stewardship of our environment.

Mention was made by the MPP for Hamilton East about consultation. All of these bills and these procedures of the legislation are works in progress. For example, the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie will be helping to conduct hearings with the public on this particular bill I understand in Kingston; our Minister of Natural Resources will soon be in Thunder Bay; consultations began a year ago with the aboriginal communities and so on. So we're a little bit puzzled in terms of the call, or the I guess the complaint, about a lack of consultation.

Let's actually talk about and reference what outside individuals, stakeholders, individuals who have a deep and abiding understanding and love and passion for the environment, say. For example, Dr. Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence, says: "The new Endangered Species Act is a significant step forward for Ontarians and the natural heritage we all value so highly. This new legislation will provide an inclusive, science-based and effective framework within which to balance different environmental and economic priorities." That's what our outside stakeholders are saying, and of course we could furnish to this Legislature and particularly to the members opposite probably an entire album of such quotations. So it's much more than just what's been provided to us in our speaking notes, as was mentioned earlier.

Simply to say, it's a bill that talks about innovation, scientifically grounded, sustained protection and intelligent stewardship.

I'll conclude by simply saying we must take care of the earth, because a good planet is hard to find.

Mr. Barrett: In keeping with comments this evening, I would commend Environmental Defence. I am known, as of this evening, to have adopted the prothonotary warbler. In fact, a few weeks ago I attended a fundraiser at the Long Point Foundation for Conservation. It was held at the Vittoria community centre and they were auctioning off an artist's proof of a Robert Bateman painting of a prothonotary warbler. My father purchased it that evening. The Long Point foundation has a philosophy of recognizing landowners and the part they play in not only conserving wildlife habitat but also, by extension, the kinds of species we're referring to this evening.

The member for Kitchener Centre, in very brief remarks this evening, made mention of the growth and prosperity in the Kitchener area. We know there are somewhere between 200,000 and 400,000 people coming to that area in the next 25 or 30 years. In the greater

Golden Horseshoe area there may be up to four million people coming in the next 20 or 25 years. I think the member indicated that—well, I actually question this theory that you can have growth and prosperity and a healthy environment at the same time. Species will suffer in your area, sir. You will end up with species remaining like the Norway rat, the American possum, the raccoon, the sparrow and the starling. I'm afraid that's the future your area will have, given this drive for growth and prosperity and population growth. That is actually one reason that a year ago the Six Nations people occupied a subdivision down my way, because of their concerns for this kind of rapid population growth.

The Acting Speaker: I'll return to the member for Kitchener Centre, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Milloy: I want to thank my colleagues who commented on my speech, and I'm going to begin with the comments of the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant. I don't share that member's pessimism about the environment and about growth and prosperity. The simple fact is: We don't have a choice. No government in this country, no government in this world, no matter what its political stripe, has a choice. We as a planet are going to continue to grow; we're going to continue to produce. At the same time, we have to find a way to work with the environment, to live with the environment, to make sure the environment continues and is not put in danger by this growth and prosperity. That's the challenge of every government in this world. I think the answer to that actually comes in the comments from his colleague the member for Whitby–Ajax, who spoke about the role of the community and the role of the individual.

I think environmental policy is one area where people actually feel they can make a difference. Whether it's putting in energy-efficient light bulbs, engaging in recycling or getting involved in a community group, organization or initiative, all of us by working together on small measures can actually make a difference in the world. I reject the pessimism of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant. If you accept his pessimism, the planet is doomed, and if the planet is doomed, I'm not sure what we're doing here tonight at 9:15. I believe in the future of this planet, and the reason why is the hope and support of the types of community organizations the member for Whitby–Ajax spoke about, and also from individuals in general.

I think about my own community—I'm going to put in a brief commercial; I have 20 seconds. I know that on Saturday morning at the Stanley Park Community Centre, people from around Kitchener and the neighbourhood of Stanley Park, where I live, will be coming to do a cleanup in honour of Earth Day. In my mind, that sort of cleanup in honour of Earth Day symbolizes the commitment to the environment and the commitment to the future we have to hold dear.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

2100

Mrs. Elliott: I'm very pleased to join this debate somewhat more formally on Bill 184, the Endangered

Species Act. At the outset, I would like to indicate that I'm very proud it was a Progressive Conservative government that first introduced the Endangered Species Act in 1971 to protect endangered species and wildlife. That's a tradition we certainly intend to uphold.

Having said that, it has been a number of years since this legislation was last reviewed and in those ensuing years the world has changed pretty dramatically, so I do commend the Minister of Natural Resources for his initiative in bringing this review forward. It is something that I think all members, from the conversations and the discussions we've heard tonight, are anxious to co-operate with and to proceed with, because the fact is that we do have over 200 endangered species in Ontario right now, representing something like 40% of all the endangered species across Canada.

We have a lot of work to do, and of course time is of the essence in order to make sure that the endangered species we're speaking of now do not become extinct. But it is important to recognize that we need to get this legislation right and we need to make sure we've listened to all the voices that need to be heard—all the voices that are going to be directly impacted by this legislation—to make sure we do have the legislation right. Although we have heard from a number of the government members this evening on the issue of consultation—it may well be that a number of groups were consulted before this legislation was brought forward, but I would submit that not all those groups have been heard from. We have certainly heard from some of them, and some of them have of course been very vocal in the media on the issue of not being properly consulted before the legislation was brought forward.

I would like to mention some of those groups, such as the Large Urban Mayors' Caucus of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, the Ontario Forest Industries Association, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association and of course many First Nations groups. I think it is worth spending a little bit of time on some of the comments that have been made by those groups with respect to their view that they have not been consulted regarding this legislation. I'd just like to read a few quotations.

One is from Michael Power, the mayor of Geraldton and president of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, who said on March 12, "No one that I know at the municipal level or among the resource stewardship community is opposing a species at risk act, but considering what is at stake, we want to ensure the new legislation and regulations are truly effective in protecting species at risk and that jobs and economic prosperity are not unduly sacrificed in the process."

Secondly, from Lynn Peterson, the mayor of Thunder Bay, who said on March 12: "No one is saying that we shouldn't be taking action to address species at risk, but we want to make absolutely certain that we get this legislation right. It's going to be with us for years to come and

we shouldn't be rushing headlong into it if we don't know what the effects may be."

Thirdly, from Paul Mistele, vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, who said on March 26: "A fast-track approach to this legislation will not give us the ability to inform and involve the thousands of farmers who may be affected. It is imperative that the government put the emphasis on engagement, not expedience."

Moving on to comments made by Jamie Lim, president and CEO of the Ontario Forest Industries Association: "Forestry has been among groups of land stewards who've been willing partners in modernizing the Endangered Species Act, offering constructive, practical recommendations. But consultation to date has been nothing more than government telling stakeholders what the act will be."

Finally, Marvin Pupeza, the Canadian Energy and Paperworkers national representative, said, "It appears as if the government is trying to keep this bill off the public radar screen, and that is troublesome. If this becomes law and impacts our industries negatively we can expect more layoffs, more families leaving Ontario and more communities in turmoil. We've already lost 120,000 manufacturing jobs in Ontario and we can't afford to lose more. We need to get this legislation right, not fast."

I think it's fair to say that there are a number of voices that wish to be heard from. Whatever consultation may have taken place—and I accept that there was consultation, but simply not enough—we need to make sure that all of those parties are informed and do have the opportunity to make their representations in order to make this legislation be what it is meant to be. To those who would suggest that this will needlessly drag out this process and that the time for action is now, I would suggest that those consultations could take place, if the government wishes to do so, on a fairly quick basis. This could happen within a very short period of time. The process really needs to take place across the province, not just in Toronto, an urban centre, but in many places across the province, particularly in the north, where there are a number of constituencies that do need to be heard from.

The other issue, though, that I would like to raise is stewardship, and there is a concern that exists with respect to the stewardship aspect of this legislation. The minister has indicated that \$18 million has been set aside for stewardship, an amount of \$4.5 million per year over four years, to properly fund the species at risk in Ontario stewardship program. Again, I'm not in a position to know this personally, but I do accept the recommendations made by a number of groups that this simply is not enough money to allow for this program to be properly funded and properly maintained, especially considering the fact that the Ministry of Natural Resources has seen its budget cut by \$36 million from last year, and there are many groups who are wondering how they're going to be able to continue even their basic operations without funding this very specific and very important stewardship measure.

I would just comment on some of the comments that have been made by other stakeholders in this process. I would like to quote from the comments made by Wendy Francis, the director of conservation and science for Ontario Nature, who indicated, "We agree the new act needs a properly resourced stewardship fund for landowners. The cost of protecting species cannot be placed solely on those who steward the land."

And Robert Wright, the counsel for Sierra Legal, said, "The province should announce proper stewardship funding and incentives at the same time as the act is introduced in March. The suggested approach of combining strong new legislation with proper funding would create a win-win situation for wildlife and landowners."

I think that's the essence of it, that we need to ensure that we do set up those win-win situations for all of the parties involved so we have a situation where, like with the greenbelt legislation and the Clean Water Act—no one would suggest that those are not proper initiatives, no one would suggest that we should not be doing all of those things and protecting endangered species; of course, we should be. But I think the point that we should mention is the fact that if we all, as a society, want to protect clean water, endangered species and greenbelt legislation, we shouldn't require that only one group in society bear the brunt of paying for those initiatives that are so valued in society. We need to make sure that the cost as well as the benefit of all of these initiatives are shared by our communities as a whole, and I think that's what we're trying to get at when we urge the government to engage in further consultation to make sure that we hear from everyone who is going to be affected.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to add my comments to this discussion.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to make some remarks on the speech of the member from Whitby–Ajax. I think her remarks were very wise in terms of making sure that government members acknowledge and recognize that what they're considering to be consultation sometimes isn't received as such by groups in communities, so simply telling stakeholders what you're doing and not actually engaging in a discussion does not constitute consultation per se. I think she makes a very important distinction between simply providing information and actually engaging community organizations in consultation in regard to this bill, and I know the member raised a number of other bills that the government purports to be bringing forward in terms of protection of air and water and land etc. I think there are some significant stakeholders who are saying, "Not only were we not consulted, we don't feel like we were consulted, and in fact we think we have something important to share in regard to how this endangered species legislation particularly is going to impact our community, our business, our way of life, our jobs." These are not issues to be regarded lightly by the government. These are extremely important issues. Again, I don't think anyone in this House would think that any of those issues are stoppers, but they certainly do

put on the government an obligation to hear from those people and to indicate either (a) you understand that their concern exists and that you're prepared to amend legislation to reduce the impact or (b) you're aware that their concern exists and you're not going to amend the legislation to reduce the impact. Either way, the bottom line is it's just a matter of appropriate due process, and I think the member for Whitby–Ajax brought those issues to light very effectively.

2110

Mr. Oraziotti: I'm pleased to comment on the remarks made by the member for Whitby–Ajax. I thought her remarks were insightful and helpful to the process. In fact, I think the discussion this evening has a tone that is fairly supportive of Bill 184. I think all members in this House recognize that Bill 184 is necessary. The last time was 36 years ago, 1971, when an endangered species bill was put in place in this province, and it is in dire need of being updated. We have only 42 of the 176 identified endangered species protected, and we're not doing enough. We all recognize that.

While I hear the opposition members make comments around consultation, be assured that our government is mindful of that. We are working through the specifics of the bill and it will be in committee and at hearings. Consultation began about a year ago. Tomorrow I will be in Kingston having dialogue with some 40-odd representatives of various organizations who are coming forward to provide their comments. We were in Windsor; the minister is going to Thunder Bay. Consultation is going on and has gone on for some time, so I want to assure members of this House that that is taking place and will continue to take place. It will also take place during committee hearings for the bill.

But I think we all need to be very frank about the fact that the legislation needs to be passed. It's long overdue. We have wide, unanimous support in this province for greater protection of our endangered species. It is part of our obligation under the federal Species at Risk Act of 2004 and under the national accord that the province do this. So we're living up to our obligation with the federal government under the national accord and are pleased to do so.

Mr. Miller: The member for Sault Ste. Marie just said this legislation needs to get passed. Well, if it needs to get passed, why did you wait so long? Why did you wait till the 11th hour in your mandate to introduce the legislation? Why are you rushing it through? I think the member for Whitby–Ajax said, "We need to do it right, not fast."

Obviously, we're hearing from so many groups that are concerned. I see the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters point to the funding of it. They point to the federal program: "From 2000 through 2005, the federal government spent over \$200 million on their national strategy on species at risk. The recent budget added an additional \$110 million over two years, but the total funding is still less than 60% of the minimum needed by the core departments. In contrast, the province only

allocated \$4.5 million per year for the next four years in support of 184 species named under the act."

They go on to point out that a recent audit done of the federal program points out all kinds of problems:

"The following are just some of the revealing findings from a June 2006 evidence-based independent audit and formative evaluation of the federal species at risk program, compiled through 74 interviews with informants, federal employees and key stakeholder informants.

"Many of the legislative, resourcing, and process problems that are being experienced as a result of the federal program will be repeated in Ontario if the proposed endangered species legislation Bill 184 is passed as is."

That's from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters.

I listed many of the other organizations, including the Ontario Forestry Association and the Ontario forest coalition. I know our leader was up in Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie last week—your hometown, member from Sault Ste. Marie—and there he heard from all kinds of people who came up to him at the events he was at and raised the issue of wanting to have input on this bill. So I say to the government, let the committee go out and get public input on this bill, as has been requested by so many different individuals and groups.

Mr. Milloy: I'm pleased to comment on the speech by the member for Whitby–Ajax and on other comments that have been made by some of my colleagues. I think we have to go back to first principles here.

This Endangered Species Act was passed in 1971. It has taken 36 years to update it, and I'm proud that our government has taken action. Again, I think you have to put it in a timing framework. In May 2006, we launched an extensive review of the old 1971 Endangered Species Act to find out what stakeholders were thinking, to find out what various groups were thinking. As I mentioned in my speech earlier, this included aboriginal organizations, land developers, environmentalists, rural communities, municipalities and the resource industry sector. What you've heard tonight, not only in the remarks I made but also from some of my colleagues here, is quote after quote from some leading environmentalists in Canada, praising our government for the leadership we've shown on this issue and also praising the legislation that has come forward.

Is it perfect legislation? Well, we're going out to committee, as my colleague the parliamentary assistant said, and we're going to have a chance to have more input from those stakeholders so they can express their concerns and we can hear from them as we move forward. But I think we can never lose sight of the fact that this is groundbreaking legislation. It has taken 36 years. I think it's long overdue, and I think the people of Ontario deserve this type of strong legislation which, if passed, will be the toughest in North America.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Whitby–Ajax has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Elliott: I'd like to thank the members for Hamilton East, Sault Ste. Marie, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Kitchener Centre for their comments, particularly the comments that were just made by the member from Kitchener Centre. I think we do applaud the government for this initiative and for bringing this legislation forward. All we want to press upon you is the need to make sure that we achieve the appropriate balance between and among all the groups that are going to be affected by this legislation. It's important to listen to all the constituencies who may or may not have been consulted but don't feel they've been consulted; they haven't been consulted fully; they have other things to bring to the table. There

are other things they think you need to know about before this legislation is passed.

We just want to make sure that at the end of the day there is a balance of legislation so that, as I indicated previously, no one group in our society is going to be burdened with the cost and responsibility for bringing to bear a good that is for the good of all of our society. That's all we're asking for, that you listen to all of those voices at the table to create the kind of balanced, sound legislation we all want to see happen.

The Acting Speaker: I wish to inform members that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 2118.

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Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Toronto-Danforth	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Elliott, Christine (PC)
Parkdale-High Park	DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Zimmer, David (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Willowdale	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Munro, Julia (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)		Ferreira, Paul (ND)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)		Sergio, Mario (L)
Samia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L) Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture		
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)		
Scarborough Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)		
Scarborough-Centre			
Scarborough East	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse		
Scarborough-Est	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)		
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux		
Scarborough-Agincourt	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Scarborough-Rouge River	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
St. Catharines	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		
St. Paul's			

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 159

N° 159

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**
Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 18 April 2007

Mercredi 18 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430

Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2

Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430

Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 18 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 18 avril 2007

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATION

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to welcome representatives of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, who join us in the House today.

For more than 75 years, OCSTA has safeguarded and promoted the interests of Catholic education in this province. Working on behalf of Ontario's 29 English-language Catholic school boards and five school authorities, the OCSTA represents the needs and perspectives of Catholic school boards to the provincial government and, when necessary, the federal government.

Over 600,000 Ontario students attend Catholic schools. Catholic school boards manage over 1,300 schools in the province and employ approximately 36,000 teachers.

The OCSTA is meeting with members today to update us on the many positive things happening in Ontario schools across the province to provide quality, faith-based education to one third of Ontario's elementary and secondary students.

Across the province, Catholic school boards are showing great gains in improving results in EQAO tests at all levels. They have improved literacy scores for high-risk students and are creating new and innovative secondary school programs to re-engage discouraged students and potential dropouts.

All members are invited to attend the reception that the association is hosting this evening from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in rooms 228 and 230 of the main Legislative Building.

We're pleased to welcome OCSTA to the Legislature today. We're delighted to hear the stories of success from our Catholic school boards in the province. Welcome.

FESTIVAL FRANCO-ONTARIEN

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): Vendredi passé, j'ai eu le plaisir de me joindre à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, Madeleine Meilleur, pour une annonce très importante pour ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans. Nous sommes allés au Rendez-vous des aînés francophones d'Ottawa, où la ministre a annoncé un octroi de 100 000 \$ au Festival

franco-ontarien de la part de la ministre de la Culture de l'Ontario, M^{me} Di Cocco.

Ce festival est une tradition annuelle qui est représentatif de la diversité retrouvée dans le grand secteur d'Ottawa. Tout le monde dans notre communauté peut en bénéficier.

Dans les dernières années notre gouvernement a initié des investissements clés dont bénéficient aujourd'hui les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes des quatre coins de la province. Dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans, plusieurs organisations, telles que le MIFO, le RDEE et le Rendez-vous des aînés francophones d'Ottawa, accomplissent leurs missions respectives en français et œuvrent à promouvoir la francophonie dans notre communauté.

Le Festival franco-ontarien a pris jour en 1976 et continue d'épanouir son public depuis plus de 30 ans. Donc, bientôt des gens de partout se rassembleront pour célébrer la francophonie à la Place des festivals les 15, 16 et 17 juin prochain.

À M. Sébastien Lorquet, le président du festival, et à tous ceux qui travaillent comme bénévoles, je souhaite un bon succès, et merci pour votre bon travail dans notre communauté.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Earlier this week, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock demonstrated real leadership on the environment by outlining a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By setting concrete medium- and long-term targets for reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 10% over the next 13 years and by 60% over the next 43 years, and marking our progress as we go, our caucus is showing the way. We must, because the government is internally divided on what to do and hasn't yet responded to the Environmental Commissioner's criticism of last fall that Ontario lacks a formal strategy on climate change. And who would believe them anyway, after their broken promise to close all of the coal-fired electricity generating plants?

As the MPP for Waterloo-Wellington, I've said many times that we have to get serious about energy conservation and energy efficiency. My own views on the environment are motivated by my belief that we have a moral obligation to leave our children and grandchildren a better world.

We know that the earth is warming. The vast majority of scientists who have studied climate change believe

that the burning of fossil fuels and the resultant release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are significant contributing factors to global warming. Many believe that we must dramatically reduce these greenhouse gas emissions or we will imperil future generations.

I believe it is prudent to conclude that humankind must adapt and attempt to minimize the ecological impacts of our activities. The problem will not be resolved overnight and our efforts will need to be sustained throughout the 21st century, but let us begin.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I want to say, we were quite fortunate today that not only did we get a visit from the Ontario Catholic trustees who were down here, but we also had the opportunity this morning to meet with the mayors of the five major municipalities in northern Ontario. They presented a report to all three parties, a report from the Northern Ontario Large Urban Mayors, and it's called Northern Lights. What they're getting at is asking the three political parties to turn their attention to specific issues that are affecting us in northern Ontario.

I believe they have what is part of the blueprint that we need in order to resolve some of the long-standing problems we have in northern Ontario when it comes to not only sustaining our communities but developing the economies around northern Ontario to benefit not only the large municipalities but all municipalities and citizens in northern Ontario.

They talk about, for example, the ability to share in the money that our resources generate within our communities. They're saying that they need to have the ability, as the mining industry, the forest industry and others do well, to share the proceeds of those industries in their communities.

They talk about the need to have energy policies that speak to the realities of northern Ontario. We know that northern Ontario has the largest utility consumers in the province in the paper and mining industries. They call for a northern Ontario regional electricity pricing system.

They talk about the need to have good infrastructure funding that is predictable so that we can build our communities into the future.

I support this report.

PREMIER'S AWARDS FOR AGRI-FOOD INNOVATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): Last week I was pleased to present the first Premier's Awards for Agri-Food Innovation for our region on behalf of Premier McGuinty.

Our government established these awards to recognize and foster innovation in the agri-food industry. The five-year, \$2.5-million Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation excellence recognizes that innovative ideas are what make our rural communities strong.

A total of 55 awards will be given out this year. The winners from the Guelph–Wellington area were Animal-Pro Products for developing a natural food additive; Beef Improvement Ontario for their work on traceability of products from farm to fork; Everdale Organic Farm and Environmental Learning Centre for their extensive farm internship program in organic farming; Kraayenbrink Farms for developing a loading system for swine which improves biosecurity; and Mapleton's Organic Dairy, or Triangle Farm, for their on-farm retail operation.

I am proud of these award winners. Recognizing and encouraging innovation on the farm will help Ontario's agri-food sector get ahead in a challenging marketplace.

1340

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I rise today to bring to the attention of all members of this House and all Ontarians the irony of the McGuinty government's supposed democratic reforms.

Earlier this week, we saw Premier McGuinty ram through Bill 155, the referendum bill, using a guillotine motion to cut off debate in this Legislature. Bill 155 is the bill which calls for a referendum on the citizens' assembly recommendation for reform of our electoral system. Of course, the bill doesn't include a provision to allow the Legislature of Ontario to approve the question put before the electors. The Liberal cabinet will be making that decision.

Another trick the McGuinty government has been using to get its so-called democratic reforms through the Legislature without proper debate by our democratically elected officials is burying them in the budget. Do you know that in schedule 11 of the budget bill appears Bill 62, legislative reform to change the system to register parties in the province of Ontario? Are we going to have a debate on it? I doubt it, when you consider all of the matters that are to be dealt with in this budget bill.

I think all Ontarians recognize that democratic reform in the hands of the Liberal government and what they promised before the last election is a complete farce.

MEMBER FOR LONDON NORTH CENTRE

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): It's a great pleasure to inform this assembly that the Social Work Doctors' Colloquium, founded in 2001, which represents the social work profession in Ontario, has today awarded the 2007 Political Award of Merit to Deb Matthews, MPP for London North Centre. Dr. Dan Andreae, co-founder and co-chair of the colloquium, said at noon hour today, "This honour is bestowed annually to an elected official who, in his or her political, professional and personal life, practises and exemplifies the values of the social work profession, including the fight for social justice."

The social work profession believes it is important to publicly recognize the commitment and achievements of dedicated individuals who strive to enhance the quality of

life in Ontario. Today, Deb Matthews received this prestigious honour. Through her tireless efforts on behalf of low-income families and most recently her outstanding work on the Ontario child benefit, for which she was mentioned in the 2007 budget, I can think of no one more deserving to accept this award.

Thank you to the Social Work Doctors' Colloquium for recognizing such a worthy recipient, and thank you, Deb, for your work on behalf of some of the most vulnerable in our community. Your work in your constituency, London North Centre, as well as throughout the province, has proven you to be a valuable member of this caucus and your profession.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London—Fanshawe): I rise in the House today to talk about the McGuinty government's commitment to delivering public health care and to providing real results for Ontario's health care system.

I also want to talk about some of the leader of the official opposition's policy plans for our health care system. The member opposite's first policy was to take \$2.5 billion from the health care system, with little explanation as to how he would do this or the devastating impact this would have on the health of Ontarians. The second policy the member opposite discussed was to privatize health care.

The McGuinty Liberals value Ontario's health care workers and recognize the results of their incredible work, like reducing wait times for many different procedures. Through relying on the not-for-profit model, the McGuinty Liberal government is dedicated to bringing quality of service, better results and lower wait times to all Ontarians.

While the members of the official opposition offer aggressive alternatives that are reminiscent of the days of Harris and Eves, the McGuinty government continues to move forward with progressive and innovative new ways to address the health needs of Ontarians.

We know there is always more to be done. We will continue to work with Ontarians to make sure that not-for-profit public health care remains in Ontario and that we don't ever move to a private, for-profit system.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise today to join the member for Timmins—James Bay in welcoming the mayors from our five large urban northern communities. I think it's a great opportunity to discuss the McGuinty government's commitment to northern Ontario and our efforts to turn around the years of damage, cuts and neglect from the previous governments.

When the previous government came to office, they cut northern highway spending by \$20 million, a 17.2% cut. Then they downloaded northern roads and bridges onto local municipalities.

This year, the McGuinty Liberals are investing \$468 million into northern Ontario highways, which is an all-time record high for northern Ontario and a 127% increase. This funding will ensure the timely completion of Highway 11 four-laning by 2012.

The McGuinty Liberals are also doubling the rural and northern infrastructure investment initiative to \$140 million in the 2007 budget, as opposed to what we saw from the previous government of downloading on cash-strapped municipalities. Eight of my smaller communities in Nipissing are benefiting from this initiative to the tune of \$4.2 million.

This government is listening to the concerns of northern Ontarians, and this can be seen through our investment of \$20.4 million into public transit in northeastern Ontario. As well, in Nipissing the long-awaited shovels are in the ground for two hospital projects in Mattawa and North Bay, and we are creating a children's treatment centre. These are vital investments for the riding. It helps to renew the faith of our citizens in our public health care system.

We know that there's more work to do, and we are working with community leaders and stakeholders to ensure that the north gets the changes it wants and needs. The McGuinty Liberals are on the right track—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Members, we have with us in the Speaker's gallery the select committee on public participation and petitions and improvement of quality of life and status of women, children, and people with disabilities from Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature, Republic of South Africa. The delegation includes the Deputy Speaker of the Legislature, the Honourable Johannes Boy Nobunga, and the delegation is led by the Honourable Nomsa Sanniflora Mtsweni. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests.

As well, I draw your attention to the members' west gallery, where with us today is Dan Newman, member of provincial Parliament for Scarborough Centre in the 36th Parliament and Scarborough Southwest in the 37th Parliament.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): Pursuant to standing orders 59(a) and 60(a), I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Mr. Hudak from the standing committee on estimates presented the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 59, your committee has selected the estimates (2007-08) of the following ministries and offices for consideration:

Office of the Premier, eight hours;

Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, seven hours;

Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, seven hours and 30 minutes;

Ministry of Natural Resources, seven hours and 30 minutes;

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, seven hours and 30 minutes;

Ministry of Children and Youth Services, seven hours and 30 minutes—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I heard "Dispense." Dispense?

Pursuant to standing order 60(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

1350

VISITORS

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would also like to recognize two very, very distinguished northerners who are in the audience today: Lynn Peterson, the mayor of Thunder Bay, and Tom Laughren, the mayor of Timmins.

We welcome both of you.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm delighted to welcome a constituent of mine from Ottawa West—Nepean and a trustee with the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board. Betty-Ann Kealey is with us. Welcome, Betty-Ann.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to have everyone join me in welcoming all the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association members who are here, including their president, Bernard Murray.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: There are so many northerners here today. There's Mr. Delgeduice, Mr. Laughren—I want to welcome them all and let them know that there are too many of us here; I'm going home today.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We have already welcomed the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association. I would like to extend a special welcome to Paula Peroni, the vice-presi-

dent; Paul Whitehead, the past president; and John Stunt, the executive director.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I hesitate to ask if there's anybody we've missed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BLIND PERSONS' RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES DROITS DES AVEUGLES

Mr. Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 215, An Act to amend the Blind Persons' Rights Act / Projet de loi 215, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits des aveugles.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I'm pleased to reintroduce my private member's bill, an amendment to the Blind Persons' Rights Act, today in the Legislature. This bill was first introduced in this Legislature in 2004 and received second reading, but unfortunately the government did not let it proceed to third reading.

My bill would give the same rights of access to public places to physically disabled, hearing impaired and autistic persons with assistance dogs that the visually impaired presently have. I ask all of you in the Legislature to support my private member's bill and give the same rights to all physically disabled persons with assistance dogs that the visually impaired presently benefit from.

BUY IN CANADA FOR MASS TRANSIT VEHICLES ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 FAVORISANT L'ACHAT DE VÉHICULES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN AU CANADA

Mr. Mauro moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 216, An Act to promote the purchase of mass transit vehicles that are made in Canada / Projet de loi 216, Loi favorisant l'achat de véhicules de transport en commun fabriqués au Canada.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): This bill would give a 30% preference for the purchase of mass transit vehicles that are made in Canada if the municipality making the purchase receives funds from the province for the purchase.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I ask for unanimous consent to put forth a motion without notice regarding the membership of certain committees.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I understand this is a debatable motion. I'd invite the government to call the motion at Orders of the Day, if it wishes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Do we have consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: The member for Niagara Centre always wants to give me heart failure in this House.

I move that the following change be made to the membership of the following committee: On the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Fonseca replaces Mr. Peterson.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

VISITEURS

VISITORS

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): M. le Président, j'aimerais présenter M. Robert Tremblay, président de l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques de langue française, qui est avec nous aujourd'hui, et M^{me} Carole Drouin, directrice générale.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): Mr. Speaker on a point of order: I'd like to welcome all the trustees and certainly all the teachers, but I'd also like to extend a warm welcome to someone from my riding who is a past president of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, Louise Irwin. Hello, Louise.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): My question is for the Premier, and once again it deals with the lottery scandal. When we've asked you to refer this matter to a legislative committee or for you to appear personally before the estimates committee, you have rejected those democratic opportunities. You fall back on the phony defence that the issues have been or are being adequately reviewed by others. But you personally know that is not accurate. No one has looked at the involvement of your office, of your senior Liberal campaign advisers or your minister and his staff. No one is looking

at those issues, and with your stonewalling efforts and the use of majority muscle, you want to hide the truth or, at the very least, contain it. Is that your real strategy here?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I just don't understand how the honourable member can make the assertion that we're not being transparent. If we weren't being transparent, we would not have embraced the Ombudsman's report, welcomed his intervention, and agreed to act on each and every one of his recommendations. Beyond that, we would hardly have turned over these materials to the Ontario Provincial Police for them to conduct the appropriate investigation and to take it from there to wherever they think is also appropriate. So I say to the member opposite, he can make the assertion that we're not being transparent, but the Ombudsman has looked at all those things that are important in this matter. We have also said to the OPP, "You are welcome to take a look at this as well."

Mr. Runciman: Premier, I will try and jog your memory. In the last election, you promised to give backbenchers and legislative committees more power and influence. What you've done instead is ignored your backbenchers, used them as mindless robots in committee and in question period as the askers of dumb and embarrassing, pre-planned, lob-ball questions in order to kill the time available for legitimate questions.

You purposely hide legislation in a budget bill, while the original legislation, Bill 62, sits on the order paper, supposedly going nowhere. You force closure on a democratic renewal bill.

Premier, this is just a partial list, but it's a clear indictment of you and your spurious promises designed to lure voters in the last election. Once again, I ask you, Premier, to make a modest effort to uphold your promise of democratic renewal and refer the lottery scandal issue to a standing committee.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I will remind the honourable member that for eight years the standing committee on government agencies was prohibited, under the Conservative government, from calling government agencies. That standing committee on government agencies, on our watch, has now been given full authority to call upon government agencies; they have looked at a number, so far, including the OLG.

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So, again, I'd ask the honourable member to carefully consider the difference in terms of the approach that we're bringing to these matters. They prohibited the calling of government agencies before a government committee. We said that prohibition was nonsense; we refused to accept that. We've changed the rules so that now that committee, which is chaired by a member of the Conservative Party, has the right and in fact has exercised that right, I believe, at least six times, including calling upon the OLG.

Mr. Runciman: If the Premier is going to re-read anything, it should be his election platform from 2003.

It's truly regrettable that the Premier refuses to appear before the estimates committee and answer questions about his own office; that he frequently refuses to answer questions in this House about the lottery scandal, referring them to a stained minister who simply repeats inane and offensive spin lines written by some Liberal hack at \$1,000 an hour.

This is not democratic renewal. This is democratic dictatorship.

I ask the Premier once again, will he appear before the estimates committee, and will he refer the lottery scandal to a standing committee? Will he do that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the honourable member says that he doesn't like the way that I handle questions. That's not an unusual complaint coming from opposition members. But I can say with pride that I've been here 68% of the time. Mike Harris was here 50% of the time. Ernie Eves was here 18% of the time.

I can also say, with respect to accountability, that we have put into place a sunshine law which has been expanded to include OPG and Hydro One. That's something that was opposed by the Conservatives. We've asked the Auditor General to take on new powers to audit hospitals, school boards, children's aid societies; he has agreed to take that on. We've expanded the ambit of the freedom-of-information legislation to include Hydro One, OPG and universities.

In terms of fiscal accountability, we've asked the Auditor General to take on a new responsibility: to take a look at the budget, to ensure that nobody ever again can hide a \$5.5-billion deficit.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is also for the Premier. Premier, we see today that it appears your Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is running a political slush fund with taxpayer dollars that appears to be used to further the aims of the Ontario Liberal Party. I know that you might take some exception to that description, so I want to give you the opportunity to explain the process which one would use to apply for these millions of dollars that the minister has rushed out the door at the end of the fiscal year. Just give us the process. How would you apply?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm pleased to take the question. It's an important opportunity to strike the contrast between the approach that we on this side of the House bring to diversity and embracing our diversity in this province and the approach brought by the former government.

All you need to know about the former government's approach to immigration is that that particular subject matter was found under the section called "Crime" in their platform; that's where it was found.

We believe that we have the responsibility in government to ensure that we embrace our immigrants; that

we put in place the necessary investments that support immigration services so that new Canadians can, as quickly as possible, become integrated into both our economy and their communities.

That is the purpose of the funding that we put in place. That is exactly why we will continue to fund important immigration services on behalf of new Canadians.

Mrs. Witmer: Once again, just as in Lottogate, you have refused to answer the question.

By the way, our leader, John Tory, has always embraced diversity and so have we.

I would say to you today it appears that a number of these—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I need to hear the question, and I would like the co-operation of the government side.

Member for Kitchener-Waterloo.

Mrs. Witmer: It appears that a number of these grants have come out of something called the YER. I have a list of the grants here, totalling some \$20 million. It's certainly more than the \$3 million or \$4 million that the minister reported in the Star today.

That begs the question of how there would be a discrepancy between what the minister is reported to have said in the Star and the facts.

As you know, just this past December the Auditor General criticized your government for this kind of last-minute spending spree. Will the Premier explain to the House today what YER is, if it's not a political slush fund, and will you, again, answer my question: What is the process? How would you apply for these funds? How do you—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been asked. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Just to clarify that one point, when asked yesterday about the number of dollars that went out this year, I was referring to the ones that were announced officially, and there were others to be announced. The largest one there that wasn't announced yet—it was going to be announced later this year in conjunction with the federal government—was \$15 million for United Jewish Appeal. So that wasn't announced yet.

Mrs. Witmer: This has to do with how the grants were allocated, not who they were allocated to. I would say to you, Premier, would you answer the question, which I've now asked twice? What was the process, how does one apply for these funds, and how were you advertising this process so that everybody in the province could apply for this money?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, being the first stand-alone ministry, we've established a full-time focus on helping newcomers, on diversity, on honouring our heritage groups. We've done that. So over the course of the last two years, many groups who were left out in the cold by your government for nine years have been coming to us, say-

ing, "Could you make up this deficit, helping us to build our community centres, helping us to build our services?" We built up many connections with many organizations that have had a dearth of funding from you, and therefore, when they come to us, and if they meet those needs of diversity, helping newcomers, building communities, increasing tolerance and understanding, we provide funding for those organizations.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Today I had the opportunity to meet with mayors from across northern Ontario: John Rodriguez from Sudbury, Lynn Peterson from Thunder Bay, Tom Laughren from Timmins, Vic Fedeli from North Bay, and Susan Myers from Sault Ste. Marie. They are here to fight for a fair deal for working people and for their communities, many of which are struggling under a job crisis that the McGuinty government is largely responsible for.

Premier, my question is this. What is more important: ensuring that northern Ontario communities receive a fair deal, or giving yourself two pay increases since Christmas?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Those would be the pay increases that you accepted on both counts, as I understand.

I want to take the opportunity to welcome the five mayors to Toronto, and particularly to Queen's Park, from Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and North Bay. I also want to thank them for the work that they do, the responsibilities that they've assumed on behalf of their constituents, and I want to thank them for the thoughtful position paper that they have collaborated on and put forward to us.

At the same time, I also want to acknowledge the continuing efforts made by my caucus colleagues Minister Bartolucci, Minister Ramsay, Monique Smith, Mike Gravelle, David Oraziatti and Bill Mauro, who are relentless in terms of advancing the cause of northerners in our caucus and in terms of ensuring that it manifests itself in government policy. We hold a very special place in our hearts for northern Ontario and the people of the north. We ensure that our policies reflect that, whether it's the funding of special supports for forestry, electricity, education—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Supplementary.

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Mr. Hampton: I want to be clear: You're taking the pay increases; I'm giving them away to community groups and charities. The mayors are equally clear, Premier. They're clear about the challenges, they're clear about—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Minister of Economic Development and Trade, order.

The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: The mayors are clear about the challenges, they're clear about the strategic investments that are needed, they're clear about the action that needs to be taken to sustain jobs, which hasn't happened. But they're also clear about something: The Premier who promised to end the downloading has, in fact, continued the downloading. The only uploading you've done is to upload taxpayers' dollars into your own pay increase. Premier, how is that fair?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: There's no doubt whatsoever that there's always more work to be done, but I think it's equally important to acknowledge that we are, together, making real progress.

With respect to downloading, we can't upload all that was downloaded by the former Conservative and NDP governments, but we've started with public health and land ambulances. More than that, we have also put our shoulder to the wheel to help our northern colleagues. We've got a billion-dollar forest sector strategy in place. We've had \$1.8 billion over five years for a northern Ontario highway strategy, the first commitment of its kind for northern highways. We've also had over \$1 billion invested in hospitals and health capital in communities like Sault Ste. Marie, North Bay, Timmins, Ottawa, Thunder Bay and Sudbury.

Again, I say there is most certainly more work to be done, but I think by any objective measure we are, together, making real progress.

Mr. Hampton: It is interesting that the Premier would mention land ambulance. Land ambulance is one of the specific issues that the mayors raise because of its gross unfairness. But they also point out that your government has failed to fix the other downloading problems, that your government has failed and now needs to share natural resource revenue with those communities that are resource based. They recognize that your government needs to implement a regional hydroelectricity rate system which is fair to northern Ontario jobs and industries. These are all good, sensible things that your government has failed to do.

Premier, at Christmastime you showed people that it took you all of eight days to ramp up your own pay. Why are these northern Ontario communities still awaiting some action from your government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: That would be the same pay hike that the leader of the NDP took, just to remind Ontarians of that.

Let me list some of the other things we've been able to do, working together with our colleagues, members of the Ontario family who happen to live in northern Ontario. We have \$140 million in rebates for the northern electricity pulp and paper transition program, which means energy savings as much as 15% over three years. We've created a new Northern Ontario Medical School, the first new medical school to open in Canada in over 30 years.

One of the most important priorities that I've heard from all of our mayors in northern Ontario is that it's

absolutely essential that they have the necessary number of doctors practising up there. We learned long ago that it's essential to have a strong connection between your medical training and northern Ontario, so I think one of the single most important things we've been able to do for northerners over the long term is to put in place their very own medical school.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Premier, you might want to be accurate: The medical school was actually started by the former government. I recognize that you want to take the credit.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. Minister of Health, I need to hear the questions.

The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: My question is for the Premier. Today the respected Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition issued a report called *Lives Still in the Balance*. It pulls no punches. It says, "Heading into an election year, the McGuinty government's record could only be described as disappointing."

Premier, once again, in four short months, you've been able to raise your own pay by in excess of \$40,000 a year. Tell me, why are the lowest-income people in Ontario now actually worse off—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been asked. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Again, yes, I did raise Mr. Hampton's pay, and he did accept that increase.

I want to thank the members of the interfaith community for their report. I welcome their advice. There is always more to be done, but I think it's important to acknowledge the progress that we've made together. It's important to recognize, as well, where we actually started from. Remember, when we got this job in the first place, the minimum wage had been frozen, social assistance rates had been cut, and the poor had been scapegoated. That's the foundation on which we had to build.

When it comes to children alone now, we have the Ontario child benefit, which is being recognized nationally as some of the most progressive, far-reaching, even revolutionary public policy, which is going to ensure that 1.3 million children growing up in poverty in the province of Ontario eventually have access to a \$1,100 benefit, which is going to cost taxpayers \$2.1 billion, but we believe that is a very sound investment.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, the report makes clear why—

The Deputy Speaker: I don't mind showing that once to see where it came from, but let's not hold it up. It is a prop. Please, put it down.

Mr. Hampton: The report makes clear, Premier, what's happening here. You promised to end the claw-

back of the national child benefit, which takes \$1,500 a year from the lowest-income kids. In fact, you're going to continue that clawback this year, next year, the year after and the year after that. You promised to build affordable housing, yet the report makes clear your record there is a serious failure. And the minimum wage is still not a living wage under the McGuinty government.

I say again, Premier, you had no trouble raising your own pay twice in four months. Why are the lowest-income Ontarians still waiting for action from the McGuinty government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, we're not as far as we'd like to be, but I think it's important to recognize that we've made some real progress. We have 15,000 new affordable housing units; 35,000 housing allowances; we have in place a rent bank which has helped almost 8,000 families stay in their homes. The Ontario child benefit—and I don't think the leader of the NDP truly understands the significance of this public policy and what it means to our families, but especially to single moms and their children. We're saying that you don't have to stay on welfare in order to access this benefit. We're saying that you can get off social assistance, you can take that job, and this particular benefit is going to accompany you when you go along. That OCB, that Ontario child benefit, costs us three times as much as eliminating the clawback and it's going to help twice as many children in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, those of us who have looked at it understand it all too well. After all of your chest-thumping, the McGuinty government is going to continue to claw back money from the lowest-income children for the next four years. We've looked at the affordable housing. Only a few hundred of the units that have been built are truly affordable for low-income families. We've looked at the issues of child care. You promised provincial money for new child care spaces. There has been no new provincial money for child care spaces.

I say again, Premier, you had no trouble raising your own pay twice in four months. How long do the lowest-income Ontarians have to wait before they see meaningful action from the McGuinty government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: In our recent budget, we invested another \$25 million in child care spaces. We've also invested in 10,000 more spaces for children's mental health. We're funding insulin pumps for 1,000 children suffering from diabetes. We have 1.5 million children so far who have received free vaccines. That saves a family \$600 per child. We've got a newborn screening program. We used to be the worst in the country; we are now first in the country. We used to test for two genetic disorders; we are now testing for 29. Some 84,000 more children in Ontario are receiving nutrition support, and we've nearly tripled the funding for children who are affected by autism.

There's always more work to be done, but I think we should acknowledge that we are making real progress on behalf of Ontario families.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm going to go to the Premier again, and it again concerns the political slush fund. So far you have not answered the question as to what the application process is. We've don't have any application forms. We don't have a list of the people who applied, who was accepted and who was denied. All we know is that some \$16 million in secret was paid out, with no announcements made.

The minister says they have to meet some criteria, but he won't tell us what the criteria are. All we have is what appears to be a shady process reminiscent of Gomery, where it appears somebody can call up a Liberal MP or a Liberal MPP or maybe Don Guy or Jim Warren or some other member of the team, and a few days later you get a cheque and there's a photo op.

Can you tell me, Premier, what is the application process and how can people in this province apply?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I think it would be worth our while to consider some specific funding we've provided, because it's not as helpful to consider it in the abstract. There are a number of news releases that I have here. We've been very transparent on this. We have provided \$50,000 to support the Afghan Women's Counseling and Integration Community Support Organization, which is doing wonderful work here in Ontario. We are investing \$50,000 to support the Korean Family and Social Services Organization. They too are doing fabulous work on behalf of the Korean community. We have also invested \$100,000 to support North York Community House, which is also doing very important work for settlement programs in their community. We are investing \$300,000 to support the St. George Arab Cultural Centre, which also provides important services to new Canadians. We are also providing \$250,000—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you, Premier. Supplementary?

Mrs. Witmer: The issue is not about who received the money. I am convinced they are all good causes. The question is, what is the application process? There are others in Ontario who would like access to these funds, but what is the process? And give us a list of the people who were applicants. Give us a list of those who were denied. Right now we have no criteria for eligibility. We have no requirements for program delivery capacity. We have no measurement and reporting on program results. This looks and smells like a political slush fund.

If it's not, can you tell us, Premier, how one can apply for this funding, and what advertising you did to make sure everyone in the province had access to these funds?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: There are a number of groups that come to us with specific proposals, and there is a full listing on the ministry website.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know they didn't hear this, because they weren't listening, but I'll say it again: There is a full ministry on the website.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I think it's important to understand what this is really all about. The Conservative Party and the former Conservative government never had any appreciation for something we're doing here in Ontario that distinguishes us from the rest of the world. Twenty-six per cent of the people living in this province were born outside of the country; 52% of the people living in Toronto were born outside of the country. This is nothing short of magnificent, and we feel we have a responsibility here in government to reach out to our new Canadians, to make sure they've got access to all the opportunities they need to succeed.

We will not apologize for investing in those programs that help to enrich the lives of people who are coming to this province to ensure that they become integrated as quickly as possible into both our economy and our society. They put immigration under the "Crime" section of their platform; we truly embrace immigration in our government.

The Deputy Speaker: New question. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, can you explain what process the Bengali Cultural Society underwent in order to qualify for a \$250-million cheque you issued on March 26? Specifically, what forms did they complete, what due diligence did your ministry undertake and what line item did the funds come from?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): First, to correct the record, the member is a few hundred million dollars off. It's \$250,000, not \$250 million.

The member opposite obviously doesn't like the allocation of \$250,000 into a high-need area of Crescent Town in his community. He doesn't like that. He doesn't like the group who's delivering the services. He's saying he has a better group. Our interest here is to provide the funding—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: We are having trouble hearing the questions here today and the responses—at least, I am. I need your co-operation, please. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: The member for Beaches–East York is basically saying that he doesn't like the group who got the money and that he has a better group that he likes. Our interest is to invest the money in one of the 13 high-need areas in Toronto, which is Crescent Town, where there is a high number of newcomers who are unemployed, who need these services—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been answered. Supplementary.

Mr. Prue: It appears that Adscam has now turned into Slushgate. Multicultural organizations in my riding and across this province are desperate for funding. You can

imagine their frustration when the Bengali Cultural Society, an organization many had never heard of in my riding, received a quarter of a million dollars. Then they see that this organization is headed by Liberal Party loyalists. Then, they hear the incumbent Liberal MP say that they were excluded in my riding because they chose to openly ally themselves with the NDP, and their frustration turns to anger.

My question is very clear to you: Can you explain why your Liberal-friendly group qualified for a quarter of a million dollars when no specific program was accessed?

Hon. Mr. Colle: He is again referring back that he doesn't like some group because it doesn't meet his purposes. This money is going to a high-need area in Toronto in Crescent Town that has a high number of newcomers who are out of work and living on the edge of poverty. The organization that he doesn't like, for whatever his reasons are, is teamed up with an organization that has been around for 54 years—COSTI. It has the highest reputation. It has set up organizations to meet newcomers' needs for over half a century. He doesn't like COSTI; he doesn't like this other group. What do you want?

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Right now I'm hearing from both sides. From this point on, I'm going to be very careful about stopping the clock. I can stand for the rest of the hour of question period if you like. I need your co-operation.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'll attempt to add a tad of civility and courtesy and politeness to the conversation. My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, every year 400 children in Ontario are diagnosed with cancer. With us today in the House are members of the Paediatric Oncology Group of Ontario, euphemistically called POGO. POGO works closely with the Ministry of Health, health care providers and children's hospitals such as Sick Kids and CHEO in my hometown of Ottawa to develop a coordinated system to help children battle this terrible disease.

I'd like to personally welcome to the House Brian Henney and Jocelyn Lamont, executive director of the Candlelighters childhood cancer program of Ottawa. Thank you very much for coming.

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Minister, in the year 2005, POGO submitted a plan to the Ministry of Health on the future development of the childhood cancer system. In their plan they identified gaps in the system that lead to delays in treatment at a time when every moment counts. Could you please tell us—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd like to hear from the minister.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to thank the honourable member for his question, and I want to join him in welcoming representatives from POGO. The Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario is renowned in our province and beyond for the great work they do in bringing together all of those players to do the best possible job for kids in our communities who have cancer. I can think of no higher calling or purpose than that, and we welcome you and thank you so much for the work you do.

The Ministry of Health has been working with POGO as a partner and has been providing resources. It's my privilege, on behalf of all members of the Legislature, to announce a further \$625,000 worth of funding so that POGO's work can go on apace and continue to deliver good results for kids.

I also want to say that we're all really excited that Childhood Cancer Awareness Week has been declared for September 17. We'll be celebrating that. I want to say one more time that for all the work that's done on behalf of those kids we're really grateful for the great work POGO does in coordinating our activities.

Mr. Patten: Thank you, Minister. I know that POGO will be delighted with your announcement today.

Actually, 125 children across Canada will be diagnosed with cancer during awareness month. They join the 10,000 children who are already in treatment. The impact on these young people and their families, of course, is a traumatic experience.

Many of my constituents are looking for a sense of what kind of plan is really in place to support many of these families and their youngsters in their battle with cancer. Can you help elaborate on this for many of these families?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: POGO is a group that helps to coordinate the work among oncologists, children's hospitals, family members and others who are interested in the subject. Through their great work, survival rates have increased quite dramatically. But of course, we know there's more that must be done. Accordingly, we will be investing \$5 million this year in an expansion of our wait times commitment to cover paediatric surgeries and the like. It shall be part and parcel of even better results, something that POGO has driven us toward.

The model of coordinated care that POGO has developed has been replicated by other provinces, and indeed jurisdictions including places like Costa Rica and Italy. I think it's very exciting that in the member's own community, in the Champlain Local Health Integration Network, the kind of work POGO has done is now influencing the kind of care we can deliver for adult cancer sufferers.

We seek to build a system to give real life and meaning to the word "system," and POGO has been a group that really makes sure that the investment we make in trying to provide for our kids is well invested and produces really great results. One more time: We applaud their great initiatives.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): A question to the Premier: In your recent budget, seniors and working families got nothing while you found room for a \$50-million gift to Magna corporation—I remind you that this gift is a result of taxpayers, small businesses and seniors—on the eve that they were about to make a multi-billion dollar bid for Chrysler. They ain't exactly crying poor at the head office at Magna.

Premier, help me understand this \$50-million grant. What was the program application? How many other businesses applied and were refused as part of this program, the \$50 million for Magna?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I can say that we're very pleased to have become a partner with the Stronach Centre, as it's going to be called. I'm not in a position to make public the final announcement, but I can say that Magna corporation had contemplated making a very significant investment in Ontario, Austria or, I believe, North Carolina. We competed for that.

What I can tell you, by way of understanding where we're going to go with this, is that I'd ask Ontarians to keep in mind that our \$500-million auto sector investment strategy landed seven billion new dollars in investment and 7,000 jobs.

There's more to come, but this is going to lead to very significant and substantial new investment in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Hudak: When it comes to Dalton McGuinty's promises, I'm not exactly going to hold my breath.

During the budget speech, the finance minister actually ad libbed this announcement. It wasn't even recorded in his budget speech. When asked the next day by reporters, the finance minister could not provide a single detail about the \$50-million gift to the Stronach Centre at Magna corporation. Not a single new job has been created by this \$50 million, and 60 grads over the next five years at the Stronach Centre means a remarkable subsidy of \$830,000 per student—mind you, all the students already employed at the Magna corporation.

Working families and seniors got nothing. Grape growers who have lost their contracts got zippo, yet \$50 million to the Stronach Centre at Magna corporation.

Premier, exactly how many jobs is this grant going to create, because, so far, you've announced not a one?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It's good to have at least some passing commentary, for the very first time, on our budget, although I think it's off message, because when the leader for Conservative Party was first asked about this in the budget lock-up and was asked specifically what he would change in our budget, he said he couldn't think of a single thing that he would change.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Number one, heckling is not allowed and, number two, when you yell, it's even worse because I can't hear. Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I can understand the honourable members' impatience.

But I can say that, again, we were in a very competitive process here. This investment, which has yet to be fully announced could have gone to Austria or North Carolina. I'm pleased to say that it's coming to Ontario. This \$50 million will leverage very considerable new investment here in the province, and it will be very much in keeping with our plan to ensure that Ontario becomes the world's centre of excellence for development of the next generation clean car and more to come.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question again is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Let me see if we got this right. An organization run by the Liberal Party activists gets a grant for \$250,000. Members of the Bengali community in Beaches–East York say that they have never heard of your organization. No one can find out about an application. We call your office, and Mr. Grimes tells us that no application was made, and the partnership with COSTI that you use to justify this is totally irrelevant, because when we called COSTI, they've never heard of your organization either. How can you credibly claim that partisan politics had nothing to do with the granting of this money?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): First of all, COSTI is a full partner in the delivery of this program in Crescent Town. In fact, COSTI brought forward the proposal, together with the group, so how can you say that?

Secondly, the organization that you don't like, that doesn't suit your purposes, is basically filling the need of providing settlement services and diversity enhancement in that area of Crescent Town, working together under the auspices of COSTI, which has a 54-year track record, and that's how it's structured.

Mr. Prue: A Liberal-run cultural group gets \$250,000 while other organizations that are in the field, on the scene, get nothing. A Liberal member of Parliament claims that she helped the Liberal organization get the grant because other more prominent organizations who are there decided to openly ally themselves with the NDP. Read Maria Minna's letter; read it. And you expect us to believe that partisan politics has nothing to do with it at all. My question to you is very simple: If it has nothing to do with it at all, will you table in this House all internal memos related to this grant, including the grant application itself, so we can see for ourselves?

1440

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, if I can repeat, this service is badly needed in Crescent Town. It's going to be delivered now in a way that is very professional because COSTI is involved. I know you don't like that, but that's the reality.

Then you talk about Liberal organizations. We are funding organizations like the Afghan Women's Counselling and Integration Community Support Organization, the African Community Services of Peel, AWIC, Bloor Information services, the Brampton Multicultural services, the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, the Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid Society, Catholic Community Services of York Region, Catholic Cross-Cultural Services. Are you going to label them by party too? You've checked the party membership for each one?

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. In the past two weeks, we have seen more than lacklustre so-called climate change plans from both the Tories and the NDP. Simply put, their plans are nothing more than platitudes. The Tories have no concrete measures on paper. They have no plan to shut down Ontario's coal plants, just like the NDP, who can't tell you what their plan will cost and think a plan to build a subway to York University is a bad idea.

Fortunately, on this side of the House, we are taking action to reduce emission gases here and now, improving the quality of life for every Ontarian. In three short years, we have reduced greenhouse gas emissions from our coal plants to below 1990 levels, unlike the Tories who increased their reliance on coal by 127% and saw greenhouse gases increase by 120%.

Just this morning, Minister, you made a historic announcement that Ontario is banning the sale of inefficient light bulbs. When will the ban take effect and what are we doing to ensure that low-income Ontarians are not adversely affected?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I know that my friend the Minister of Energy has a lot to say about the exciting announcement that he and I made at the home show today. Let me say to the member for Guelph, who has been a big advocate for strengthening the environment in her community, that today we announced the banning of the sale of inefficient lighting, because that's an important part of a comprehensive strategy on climate change that will reduce one million tonnes of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. It's a proud day for Ontario, a big day for the environment, and I know the Minister of Energy looks forward to giving more details with respect to this important announcement.

Mrs. Sandals: It's good to know that you're doing such great work for the province. To both ministers: It's a shame that the previous government didn't see the need for and the importance of conservation. I'm glad that our government does.

As you mentioned, if we all change just one light we can make an enormous difference. I hear from my constituents that they want to do their part. In fact, the Porchlight program was tremendously well received in Guelph where we handed out free fluorescent bulbs to

replace incandescents. Along with the ban on inefficient light bulbs, you also launched five province-wide conservation initiatives. What opportunities do these initiatives provide for the people of my riding and how can they participate and do their part to conserve energy?

Hon. Ms. Broten: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): Unlike the leader of the NDP who thinks that inefficient lights are just a photo op, we think they're important. We think the project in Guelph was an excellent example. Project Porchlight is reaching across Ontario. Our announcement today puts Ontario at a leadership position, not only in Canada, but indeed in the world.

This government's commitment to energy efficiency and this government's commitment to eliminating greenhouse gases shows a positive plan that will move not only Ontario but Canada forward in a way that will keep us in compliance with Kyoto, that will ensure that average people in this province can do their part to help eliminate greenhouse gases. Yes, we're ensuring, through projects like Project Porchlight, that all Ontarians can share in this great project, this great greening of our environment and the greening of our energy sector.

SPORT AND RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Health Promotion. Minister, communities in Oxford wanted money for recreational projects under the economic stimulus package, but they never received an application. When we asked on behalf of His Worship Steve Molnar, the mayor of Tillsonburg, your office said, "There are no applications. There is no open process."

Minister, we were told that projects were selected because they were known to your office. Minister, what do municipalities have to do to be considered? Go the Liberal fundraiser? Volunteer for your party? Is this how your political slush fund works?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I want to thank the honourable member. I also want to remind him that the very first infrastructure announcement that I made was in the municipality of Orillia, represented by Garfield Dunlop. It was a \$4-million contribution to the multi-purpose recreational facility.

I might also add that there has been only one riding that has received two sport and recreation infrastructure programs. Those are projects in Wilmot and Woolwich in the riding of Ted Arnott, your colleague. I'd suggest you get some pointers from Mr. Arnott and Mr. Dunlop on how to apply for these—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister. Minister, hello.

Point of order, member for York North.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to remind the House that I believe the Speaker has ruled on the process of referring to individuals by their riding names.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you for the reminder, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I thank the member for the intervention. The two ridings that I pointed out are opposition-held ridings. This is a very worthwhile project that I have been trying to convince the federal government to come to the table to create these kinds of arenas and recreation centres and swimming pools to create the culture of wellness that we need in the province of Ontario. So I would suggest to the honourable member that he get on the phone and call his federal counterpart so we can double the number of sport and recreation projects in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I don't know how many times I've said it today, but the yelling is just getting a bit much. Heckling isn't allowed, but yelling really makes it worse. Supplementary.

Mr. Hardeman: I guess the minister has just said that we should blame the mayor for not having applied because the minister didn't send out applications. It's not where the money went; it's that applications never went out.

Minister, you handed out \$26.4 million with no transparency and no accountability. Most municipalities weren't even considered because they never got a chance to apply. And it hasn't stopped. My staff was told, "The best way to make sure that your communities are considered for future funding is to make sure that our office is aware of them." How is this a fair and open process? Will you just admit that you are running a political slush fund to try and keep this promise-breaking government afloat?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I'm not blaming the mayor; I'm blaming the member for Oxford for not doing his job and standing up and finding out about the economic stimulus program that the finance minister announced in a press release on the website: \$26 million to go into sport and recreation infrastructure. This is a worthy investment. I'm proud of this program. It's very regrettable that the Conservative Party is saying no to those hundreds of municipalities that want sport and recreation infrastructure. The honourable member should do his job. Send me a letter, tell me what the project is, and stop complaining.

1450

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question, again, is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. On March 26, you announced a quarter-of-a-million-dollar grant to an organization that is not known at all in my riding; you did not notify me or the residents of Beaches–East York that you were going to do it. When I asked you why we were not invited, in the halls of this Legislature the next day, you said that you had only found out about it 15 minutes before the actual announcement was made and that you didn't even know who the

organization was. You can imagine my surprise when today's Toronto Star reported that you had met with this very organization that you had claimed not to even know some two weeks before.

My question to you is a simple one: Why did you forget about this organization?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Again, he's got something with this organization.

That day was Bangladesh National Day, and we were being invited to have a Bangladesh flag-raising; we were going to do it either here at Queen's Park, like we sometimes do, or somewhere else. Anyway, that was supposed to be the day. Then it was decided, in an urgent way, that we were going to perhaps use that occasion to make the funding announcement. We were rushing it because we hadn't anticipated that it would be done on the same day as Bangladesh National Day. That's the reason.

Mr. Prue: I'm not sure what kind of answer that was, but I'm going to try again.

You came to my riding to give a quarter of a million dollars to an organization that we, in our community, had never heard of. You claimed you didn't know anything about the organization, but in fact you had met with them just two weeks before. You claimed you were too busy to invite me and the people of our community, but you found time to invite the incumbent Liberal MP who, we now know, orchestrated the grant and has close links and is Liberal-friendly.

Will you table in this House your briefing materials for the announcement and your briefing in March so that we can sort the whole matter out and see what really, really happened that day?

Hon. Mr. Colle: What really happened there and what is happening all across Ontario is that high-needs communities in the immigrant community that have been ignored for the last 15 years are getting the support they've asked for and needed for decades.

Yesterday I was in Kitchener–Waterloo, where we made an investment of \$1.5 million with the Kitchener–Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, the University of Waterloo, the WRIEN program in Waterloo.

Those are the types of investments we're making. You don't like those investments. That's the bottom line. This is a positive investment in a high-needs community that you've got a problem with.

HEALTHIER SCHOOLS STRATEGY
STRATÉGIE VISANT DES ÉCOLES
PLUS SAINES

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): Ma question est pour le ministre de la Promotion de la santé. Ministre, la semaine dernière, vous nous avez donné une mise à jour au sujet de la stratégie visant des écoles plus saines pour les élèves de l'Ontario.

On sait que l'obésité devient de plus en plus commune parmi les enfants, et il est très important d'aider les gens

à faire les bons choix, qui seront positifs quant à une alimentation saine et une vie active.

Monsieur le Ministre, vous avez dit dans votre déclaration qu'il y a quelques écoles dans la province qui ont introduit des initiatives pour encourager les jeunes à manger des repas plus sains et à intégrer plus d'exercice.

Pouvez-vous partager avec nous de plus amples détails au sujet du soutien qu'on donne à de telles écoles pour les encourager à maintenir une école plus saine?

L'hon. Jim Watson (ministre de la Promotion de la santé): Je veux dire un grand merci au député d'Ottawa—Orléans, grand défenseur de l'éducation publique dans sa circonscription d'Ottawa—Orléans. Je veux féliciter chaque école qui a répondu au défi pour son engagement envers la santé des étudiants.

The honourable member mentioned there has been a 300% increase in obesity rates among children in the last 15 years, as was reported in Dr. Sheela Basrur's report *Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives*.

I am very pleased to report that one of the recommendations we have implemented from Dr. Basrur's report is to bring a recognition program to those schools that are going above and beyond the call of duty to create a healthy environment in their schools. I'm pleased to report that almost 1,000 schools across the province have signed up for the healthy school challenge in the province of Ontario. We look forward to letting all members know which schools in their ridings are taking part so they can say "Thank you; job well done," to the students, to the parent councils and, of course, to the teachers and principals.

Mr. McNeely: Thank you, Minister, for your response and the good work that you've been doing in making our schools healthier.

Minister, I recall that on the day that you reported to the House about the healthier schools strategy, the member for Lanark—Carleton responded and asked why we were not building new gymnasiums for elementary schools—a strange question from people who didn't believe in gymnasiums.

Through the Good Places to Learn strategy, our government is ensuring that schools are in a state of good repair by leveraging \$4 billion for badly needed repairs, renovations and school construction across the whole province. There are currently almost 6,800 school building improvement projects completed or under way.

Minister, could you correct the member for Lanark—Carleton and advise him how our investments have benefited the schools in his riding, unlike the government that preceded us?

Hon. Mr. Watson: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I have to say I always find it interesting when members opposite compare their record on education to ours. I know that's what the member for Ottawa—Orléans was referring to: the member for Lanark—Carleton. So I just want to remind the member from Lanark—Carleton that, through our Good Places to Learn strategy, the four

English school boards in his riding have benefited immensely. There have been 336 repair projects as a result of \$24 million from Good Places to Learn. Through the improvement to the funding formula—that's the Liberal funding formula—there have been 126 million new dollars, about \$409,000 more per school, in that riding, and \$5 million of that new money is for capital repairs, renovations and additions. That's about \$16,000 more per school for these repairs and renovations and additions. The Tory—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition delivered to me by Mr. Michael Orr of Toronto. I read it into the record.

"Petition to Ontario Legislature to End Discrimination

"Whereas the Ontario government already fully funds 93% of faith-based schools in Ontario, but the remaining 7% receive no funding, solely because they are not Catholic;

"Whereas the United Nations Human Rights Committee ruled in 1999 and again in 2005 that this arrangement is discriminatory and violates basic international human rights law that Ontario formally agreed to uphold;

"Whereas all three parties represented in the Legislature support Catholic separate school funding, as guaranteed by the Constitution of Canada, so that the only fair and viable solution to the discrimination is to extend funding to the small religious minorities that are currently excluded;

"Whereas the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that Ontario has the constitutional power to provide funding to non-Catholic faith-based schools;

"Whereas Ontario is the only Western democracy that fully funds faith-based schools of one religion to the total exclusion of all other religions, while all other provinces except the Atlantic provinces fund faith-based schools and have thriving public school systems;

"Whereas the cultural survival of the affected minority groups is at stake;

"Whereas faith-based schools produce responsible and productive citizens; and

"Whereas the Multi-Faith Coalition for Equal Funding of Religious Schools in December 2004 submitted to the Minister of Education a detailed proposal for the funding of non-Catholic faith-based schools in a manner that is fair and accountable and protects and enhances the public interest;

"We call on the Ontario Legislature to pass legislation to provide equitable funding in respect of all faith-based schools in Ontario, without religious discrimination and without any reduction in funding for the public education

system, with accountability requirements and standards in place to ensure that the public interest is safeguarded.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition because I believe in it wholeheartedly. I pass it on to page Alanna to deliver it to the table.

1500

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I have here a petition signed by a number of Ontarians concerned about the minimum wage. It reads as follows:

“Whereas more than 1.2 million Ontarians work at jobs that pay them less than \$10 an hour;

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government has failed to ensure a living wage for working families;

“Whereas people who work hard and play by the rules should be rewarded with the opportunity to earn a decent living and the chance to get ahead;

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals were able to increase their own pay by 31%;

“Whereas an increase in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour would help Ontario's working families earn a living wage;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to pass Bill 150, the NDP's living wage bill, which would immediately increase the Ontario minimum wage to \$10 an hour.”

I agree, proudly affix my signature and pass the petition on to page Jacob.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions from the residents near that bridge on Old Weston Road and Keele Street. It's to the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation. The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing;

“Whereas TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue–Old Weston Road bridge;

“Whereas this bridge (underpass) will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it's about 50 metres long). It's dark and slopes on both east and west sides, creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge”—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): On a point of order, the member for Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I'd like to introduce our page Alanna's parents. Karen and Dan Newman are in the audience today. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Please, there are times when you can do that. But you are welcome.

Member for Davenport.

Mr. Ruprecht: I'd like to applaud you as well, but this came at a very appropriate time, because I'm talking about a special bridge, Mr. Speaker. So I was interrupted, and now, unfortunately, I don't know—I think I was at the point where this was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses. I think that was it. But now the area has 900 new homes.

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge with its high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow.”

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for listening to this petition, and I'm delighted to sign it.

The Deputy Speaker: I remind members that you can shorten petitions out of courtesy to your fellow members.

LAKEVIEW GENERATING STATION

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I have a petition for the House.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Whereas there should be no decisions on the future development of the Lakeview generating station grounds until:

“A full, independent environmental assessment, including air, water, soil samples and a health study of long-term residents, is completed to determine the historical, current and accumulative impact of industrial pollutants on the existing environment of Lakeview, southeast Mississauga, and its citizens; and

“Government includes this assessment and gives its findings equal weight in all mandatory environmental reports regarding future development of the Lakeview generating grounds.”

I am pleased to present this petition and affix my signature to it.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): I will shorten mine. It says:

“That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and

demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

I agree with this petition. I affix my name thereto and will give it to the page, Thomas.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): Thank you for giving me a second opportunity.

This petition is signed by a number of Ontarians as to grant the Ombudsman oversight of children's aid societies. To share my time with other members, I shall only read the "Therefore, be it resolved" clause, which is as follows:

"Therefore, be it resolved that we support the Ombudsman having the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province's children's aid societies (CAS)."

I agree and affix my signature and hand it over to page David.

YORK SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberals are moving forward with a subway extension to benefit Toronto and York;

"Whereas Howard Hampton and the NDP wants to kill it despite the fact that it will help the environment, students and the fight against gridlock;

"Whereas we want to keep moving forward, not backwards;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We support the Liberal plans for the York subway expansion and reject Howard Hampton and the NDP's desire to kill it."

I support this petition and I affix my signature to it.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

"Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston."

I agree with this petition. I have signed it, and 220 people from Alliston are coming down tomorrow to debate a motion in this regard.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on Highway 35 four-laning:

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35, and that expansion has been put on hold by the McGuinty government; and

"Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton; and

"Whereas the final round of public consultation has just been rescheduled;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation."

I'm going to hand it to page Jordan.

HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 1999; and

"Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

"Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe-Grey;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe-Grey."

Of course, I agree with that petition. I've signed it, and I'm going to give it to page Emma to bring to the table.

1510

YORK SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Right on, Mr. Speaker. This petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas York region and the city of Toronto have witnessed a substantial increase in traffic gridlock over the last several years; and

"Whereas these two regions continue to face traffic gridlock, which is an overwhelming economic and environmental problem; and

"Whereas we are significantly disappointed with the position of the leader of the NDP who wants to cancel the Spadina-York subway extension;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all York region and Toronto MPPs do their utmost to have the Spadina-York subway extension construction start during the year 2007."

I am pleased to support this petition.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to do with the Day Nurseries Act. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government enacted regulation 505/06 under the Day Nurseries Act; and

"Whereas regulation 505/06 came into force on January 1, 2007, changing the cost-sharing formula between the district of Parry Sound social services and administration board, the government of Ontario, and child care service users; and

"Whereas regulation 505/06 has resulted in disqualification of child care subsidies for working and single-parent families; and

"Whereas the regulation has resulted in fee increases of up to 96.5%; and

"Whereas adequate time should be provided to allow families time to make alternative arrangements and for non-profit daycare spaces to be developed in the communities served by the" district social services administration board;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as follows:

"That the McGuinty government repeal regulation 505/06 in the district of Parry Sound until such time as adequate non-profit child care spaces can be created to provide an alternative for working families."

I support this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless

long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I have signed this petition.

VISITOR

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I would ask all members to welcome Ruth Reid of my riding to the assembly. She is here to watch her grandson, page David Patterson from Brampton West–Mississauga, perform his duties—admirably, I might add.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFEGUARDING AND SUSTAINING
ONTARIO'S WATER ACT, 2007LOI DE 2007 SUR LA SAUVEGARDE ET LA
DURABILITÉ DES EAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 17, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 198, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario's water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act / Projet de loi 198, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario afin d'assurer la sauvegarde et la durabilité des eaux de l'Ontario, à apporter des modifications connexes à la Loi de 2002 sur la salubrité de l'eau potable et à abroger la Loi sur le contrôle des transferts d'eau.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for London—Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London—Fanshawe): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to participate in the second part of the debate about the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act. We listened a lot yesterday in the House to many different members from the opposition and the government sides.

It's an interesting bill because it's very important, especially while we're talking about climate change, which puts all of our natural resources at risk. I was listening to the members opposite yesterday talking about how important it is to sign this agreement, that this agreement's not good for Ontario, that this agreement will take advantage of Ontario and the water which we enjoy in the province. I want to tell the members opposite—I especially remember the member from James Bay when he was talking yesterday about how this agreement's not good for the province of Ontario, not good for the north, not good for the natives and not good for many different companies. I disagree with the member because I think this agreement is a safeguard to water in Ontario. It's important for all of us. As you know, in this province we enjoy clean water, we enjoy the amount of water we have, so it's our duty as stewards of this land at the present time.

I was meeting with trustees from the Catholic board a few minutes ago before I came to this House and they're talking about how important it is that we are stewards of so many different resources at the present time. We have to make sure to pass on these resources in good shape to future generations and not to abuse them, whether it's water, trees, roads—any resources that we have. At the present time, with new technology and many different factories opening in the different parts of Ontario, it's our duty to make sure all these companies and those factories and institutions, municipalities, groups and agencies perform according to law and regulations and also protect water sources. As you know, many factories in the past used to discharge unclean water into rivers, which ran into and polluted lakes. We strongly believe these lakes have come back to us as a form of drinking water and to water plants and to be used for farming. It's our duty as a province, by creating a safeguard, to make sure all the water discharged into rivers and going to the lakes be clean and not polluted.

I was astonished one time in my riding of London—Fanshawe when I was invited to Corey Auto Wreckers. I went there and they started to explain to me what they do on a daily basis, how they can protect the environment. I didn't know before that in the trunk of every car, when you open it, is a small ball of mercury. When you open the trunk of the car, it turns the light on, and when you close it, it turns the light off. If that small ball of mercury for some reason went into a lake, it would pollute almost 10 acres of lake for one year. It's just incredible because in so many different places they don't pay attention to this issue. If that mercury went into the water, it would kill the life in those lakes, kill the fish and all the species which live in those waters.

It's our responsibility, as a province and as a government, to make sure all of these safety mechanisms are in place. It's our duty to protect the water, not just in our area watersheds but in many different jurisdictions. The five lakes are shared by many different states and the province of Ontario. That's why this agreement was signed in December 2005. It's important for Ontario and Ontarians. It's important for the future of this province.

I also had the chance to sit with a group from London. They've come to Queen's Park many different times to lobby governments, whether it's the provincial or the federal, to create some kind of infrastructure to link all the cities around London, Ontario, with the same water sources coming from Lake Erie and Lake Huron because they want to make sure this water is protected and well organized. So many mistakes happened in the past that they want to make sure that clean water comes to the cities and that a big authority looks after it. I would say that 7,000 to 8,000 square kilometres—all the cities and municipalities, whether urban or rural areas, will participate in it, with great support from both the provincial and federal governments, and also the municipalities, because it's very important to make sure that clean water comes to everyone.

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In the minds of our region, the Walkerton issue is still alive. I learned that when my committee went to Walkerton. We went to many different municipalities dealing with the Clean Water Act. There are still people disturbed about that issue, about that incident that happened and took many lives. Back then, they blamed the government. That's why we are in power right now. We don't want to abuse the system or abuse our power. We want to utilize it and benefit the people we represent on a daily basis. That's why it's our responsibility to make sure all these issues are in place.

Also, we know that with climate change, water levels are dropping on a yearly basis. We know that if we don't protect our water in this province, we're going to create some kind of shortage of water that is going to affect not just the province of Ontario but the whole region. That's why we want to make sure that all the states around the lakes surrounding the province of Ontario respect the law and respect the agreement, because we, naturally, share the water with them. They should also respect the agreement which states clearly that whatever water you take from that lake, you should send back the same amount after you clean it, whether it's sewer system water, municipal water or farming water. We have to create a mechanism to make sure that whatever we take from the lake, we send back in the same fashion, in the same way, as clean as we took it.

I was listening yesterday to the member from James Bay when he was talking about a company in the north, and how, if we implement this act, it is going to affect that company in the north badly because they won't be able to perform in the system.

We are committed to protecting nature. We are committed to protecting our clean water in this province of Ontario. Any company that wants to open in Ontario, any

factory that wants to open in Ontario and any institution that wants to open in Ontario has to respect our rules and regulations. They have to also make sure that whatever they do on a daily basis, they do according to our environmental assessment, rules and regulations. We don't want to open a factory for the sake of employing five, six or 10 people—whatever number—if we have to pollute our rivers and our lakes. That's not our intent. Whatever we do, we have to make sure that environmental issues are being protected and respected.

We in this province can now continue to work with all the groups who want to help us protect our water. I'm proud to be part of a government that has a ministry that respects these rules and makes sure our fish are protected. As I mentioned many different times, we're only here on a temporary basis. We are here today. We have the ability, we have the capacity to control the water, to control the road and to control the factory. We have to make sure that when we leave this life, we pass it to our children and grandchildren in good shape. Our responsibility in this House as stewards of the land is to make sure all of this water is protected.

When I was a part of the standing committee on social policy, dealing with the Clean Water Act, I got the chance, with my colleagues from the opposition parties and the government, to visit many places. It was a great eye-opener. When I went to my own area, they were talking about how important clean water was to them and how important it was to them to have clean water to feed the cattle, to water plants and to do farming on a daily basis. They were also worried about many municipalities that don't respect rules and regulations, and ship water to the lake and pollute the lake. In the end, we also talked last week about a different bill on endangered species. We had a reception yesterday—so many people came to that reception—about endangered species. We as human beings and stewards of the land, by not protecting the environment and not protecting the water, are affecting many different species. We're trying to kill those species which have existed for many years in the past because we're not paying attention to whatever we do. We discharge chemicals sometimes, we discharge a sewer system into the river without cleaning it, and it goes to the lake. Indirectly, we're killing so many species.

That's why this bill is very important, vitally important, for the province of Ontario, vitally important for many species that exist in the province, vitally important to our climate change. We are entrusted and we should protect the climate. We should create all the mechanisms to lower emissions, to lower whatever possible, to make sure our environment is protected. If it's not protected, well, we can end up like many nations, countries: We'll have no trees, we'll have no clean water, and also the water is going to go dry and we'll have no ability to do farming and no ability to have clean water. That's why this bill is important.

When I listen to my colleagues from the opposite side, they have some kind of cynicism about the implementation; they have doubts all the time. I don't know why. It's just a very clear bill, a very clear statement

from the minister, from the government. We want to work together, not just as a party and a government. We want to work with all the opposition groups to make sure to send one message to all the states around the five lakes. We care about the environment. We have to continue to work to protect our resources. We have to work collectively to make sure we have clean water, not just for the present time but also for the future because, as I mentioned—I said it many times—we're the stewards of the land for a certain period of time. We have to make sure we pass these great resources to our generations to come, to our future, to our grandchildren. We have the ability at the present time to do that. It's our obligation, our duty, to make sure the generation that is going to come after us gets the land, the environment, the lakes, the water, the trees even better.

That's why we on this side of the House believe strongly in the importance of this bill. This bill is important for the future generations. That's why I would invite all the members opposite to join us and vote in support of this great bill. It's the only way we can protect the environment, the only way we can protect our clean water. That's why we're debating this bill.

I want to thank you very much for allowing me to speak. Hopefully, the people listening to us agree. I have a great hope that they will support us. I hope also the members opposite will support us because of great things, not just for us but for the province of Ontario, for the generations to come.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have a few questions to the member for London-Fanshawe. He may have an opportunity to answer them, I don't know.

I wonder whether the government or the ministry has done an assessment of the aggregate impact of taking 19 million litres per day in withdrawals from one lake system and transferring them to another. We're talking 19 million litres a day transferring from one lake to another. Cumulatively, in the aggregate, how many billions of litres of water are we talking about? If you are the stewards of water, have you assessed the impact of that which you permit in this bill?

The other question: You're now saying to the corporations, "We're going to come after you. We're going to make you pay for the water you extract from the ground." As stewards of the water, you're saying you'll now charge \$3.71 per million litres. That's a lot of litres of water. You say you're going to generate about \$18 million just to deal with the cost of the administration. Is that what you mean by being tough on the corporations for making millions or billions of dollars by taking water out of the earth? Is that what you mean by being stewards of the water?

The final question is, you get to announce in 2007 that they get to pay the \$3.71 per million litres, but this doesn't come into effect until 2009, and I wonder what the political logic or ecological logic is for you to do that. I would appreciate any response you might have to those questions.

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The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): This bill reminds me very much of Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Here we are just a slight five-something months before an election and all of a sudden we're getting a Clean Water Act, notwithstanding that there was a promise during the last election that we were going to look after our water; we were going to be very protective of our water. Yet here it is, at the 11th hour—

Interjection.

Mr. Chudleigh: The member from downtown Toronto there is getting excited about it. At the 11th hour we're bringing in a water bill and all of a sudden we're really green. We're really going to be green from now until election time.

This bill doesn't take effect until 2009. That's six years, six long years after the 2003 election. The Liberals promised during the election that they were going to stop allowing companies to raid our precious water supplies. Now what are they going to do to protect Ontarians from these companies that are going to raid their water supplies? Water supplies come out of wells, and the wells of this province of course supply a huge number of rural properties, mine included. Once they start protecting our precious water supplies, does that mean there's going to be metering on residential wells? Does that mean there are going to be taxes collected on our metered water coming out of our wells? You give a Liberal an opportunity to tax, and he'll tax forever and a day. The Liberals are the party that believe that your take-home pay is unused tax room. That's where this party is coming from, and this will be a new resource that the Liberal government can add to the coffers of Ontario so they can pass it on to their Liberal friends.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): First let me say how delighted I am to comment on some of the points that my seatmate here, the member from London-Fanshawe, made. Not only does he have a right, I think he understands what we're trying to do, what this bill is supposed to do.

We're very fortunate. We're on the shores of the Great Lakes, with about 25% of the world's water resources. Yes, we have an abundance of those resources, and through no fault of anybody we've been taking, I guess, for granted that we have these unlimited resources. But I think as we move forward we see, day in and day out, that we have to take more care of our environment. So, yes, this probably is not going to fix all our water woes to come, because we don't know what they're going to be, but we are taking great steps to identify them and try to protect them. We're making a huge investment to our conservation authorities to identify those water resources we have across the province, and this will just enhance that so that we can start protecting it. Not for today; frankly, we have an abundance of water today, and I think that's been our thought all along, but it's about time we started talking about the future.

I'm just going to make a comment on one of the comments the member opposite made about water meters

and private water wells. I've been into private water wells for well over 30 years, and I think they're getting those speaking points from Mr. Hillier. I think that's where they're getting them, because that's the rumour he's spreading. There's no intent, there's never any mention, so I guess they're just making up comments as they go. They're just making up stuff to trip on. I know that Mr. Hillier has been a big help to that side and they keep on listening to him.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I know the member from Northumberland has brought up the notion of taxing wells, and I would certainly oppose 100% any plan by Dalton McGuinty to tax private wells in the province of Ontario. I know that landowners in my riding have expressed their concern about this with good reason. If it lives, breathes, moves or thinks, Dalton McGuinty has put a tax on it since he came into office, despite a campaign promise to the contrary.

I know individual landowners in my riding, through Toby Barrett's riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, have seen an incredible enforcement on gas wells, for example, where staff from the Ministry of Natural Resources have come down hard on landowners, have imposed fines, have demanded significant down payments of tens of thousands of dollars on private gas wells and have come on property without even calling the property owner. They have just shown up on the site. That's in southwestern Ontario, on the north shore of Lake Erie. I don't think it spreads out across the province, but it's alarming. Mr. Barrett, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, and I attended a meeting with over 100 property owners impacted by this.

The McGuinty government is also installing, by legislation, meters in all of our homes for our electricity charges so that they can charge higher prices to seniors who operate their appliances during the day.

So it's certainly not a stretch for the McGuinty government, which has imposed all kinds of fees and taxes—already doubling drivers' licence fees, delisting OHIP services like physiotherapy and chiropractic and charging for them now—to go after individual wells on top of that.

I will note that in the budget bill, which will be before a committee next week, there's a grand new power given to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to charge fees for services, for anything the ministry desires. I don't know if the member from Northumberland has read that part of the budget bill, but it basically says the minister can charge fees for any services in that ministry, which gives great concern about the next plan for wells.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm told that that concludes our time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member from London-Fanshawe.

Mr. Ramal: I want to thank the members from Trinity-Spadina, Halton, Northumberland and Erie-Lincoln for their comments.

First, I want to start with the member from Trinity-Spadina, who was talking about the percentage of water we're taking from one lake to another lake. Part of the agreement that exists in Ontario right now, I believe, is

that if you take a certain amount of clean and purified water from one lake, you have to return the same amount back to that lake. It's our commitment, as a province. Also, we're not just acting alone in this province. We have our partners, the states surrounding the five lakes, which exist around the province of Ontario; we have to consult with them—and I think we're in agreement with them—to make sure that whatever we take from the lakes, we send back in the same fashion, in the same way.

Also, the member from Halton was talking about why the government is rushing this bill, fast and quick. I want to tell him that since we came to this House in October 2003, we have gone through many bills concerning many issues, and we're going to continue all the way, until we finish our agenda and finish our mandate. We're not going to stop tomorrow because the election's coming on October 10, 2007.

Mr. Hudak: It keeps changing, I know.

Mr. Ramal: No, it's still fixed, and we're not going to change it.

We're going to continue to work until the last minute of our mandate to implement all of our agenda.

I also want to thank the member from Northumberland for speaking on this bill and supporting this bill, on very important issues.

I listened to Mr. Hillier who in many different fashions, in different ways, is against the government interfering with anything, as if he thinks he's in charge forever in certain areas, but he doesn't know he's a temporary steward of the land.

We, as a government, are responsible for making sure this land and this water are protected, because the water on our land is not ours; it may be coming from different streams. So it's our responsibility to protect those streams, to protect those wells. That's why we act as a government.

The member for Erie-Lincoln didn't speak about this bill; he spoke about different issues concerning different things.

We are here to serve, and I'm happy to be a part of a government that's going to work until the last minute to serve the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? I'm very pleased to recognize the member for Burlington for her maiden speech in this Legislature.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to address you and my colleagues here at Queen's Park as the member from Burlington. I'm especially honoured because the people of Burlington have placed their trust and confidence in me and chosen me to represent them as their MPP. They have sent me here to this prestigious House to speak on issues that matter to them, and I will proudly do so on their behalf.

I believe that our history and our experiences shape us and shape how we move forward into the future. As Winston Churchill said, "The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see." So when considering what I wanted to say today, I naturally

reflected on the events of my life that have brought me here to this day.

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This is a continuation of events that began for my family and me many years ago. Like so many Canadians, I was not born here in Canada; my birthplace is Shanghai, China. My mother's heritage is Greek Orthodox Russian. She was born and raised in Harbin, Manchuria, of Russian parents who left their homeland just prior to the revolution to seek a more democratic life. My father, whose heritage can be traced to the Spanish Jews, was born in Hilla, Iraq. My paternal grandmother moved with her young children to Hong Kong after my grandfather's death because she had a close relative there and he was going to help her raise the children. Many years later, my mother and father met in Shanghai and, from the stories I've heard told by my parents, family and friends, it was a comfortable life.

There was much unrest leading up to the Chinese revolution, and the life they had enjoyed no longer existed. My parents feared for our family's personal safety, and in December 1949, after many meetings and negotiations with Chinese officials, we were finally allowed to leave China. We did so on a freighter travelling with a circus on the deck. We travelled from Shanghai to Israel, where I lived in a refugee camp with my family for over three years waiting for government processes to run their course before we were able to find our new home here in Canada.

There were many hardships, I'm sure, but my sister and I remember very few of them. I suppose this is because, as parents will do, we were protected and simply allowed to lead a child's life.

My parents chose Canada to be our permanent home because of the opportunities that exist here. My mother told us in later years that it was her choice to make Canada our home because everything she had known about Canada was that it was charitable and tolerant, solidly founded on two languages and two cultures, and it was this diversity that attracted her. She knew we would be safe here and her daughters would have many opportunities to succeed. So my sister, Rita, and I grew up in Toronto—our new, safe home.

Following my marriage to Ron, we chose Burlington as our home and we raised our children, Robb and Natasha, in Burlington. Burlington is founded on a history of agriculture. It was a major port—Port Nelson, in fact—and apples were the main export. As the townships and hamlets amalgamated, the proud, sophisticated city of Burlington evolved. Burlington still boasts about her agricultural heritage, and even though my riding represents just the urban area, more than half of the land mass of our great city is rural and agricultural. We enjoy the natural treasures of Lake Ontario and the Niagara Escarpment.

Chief Thayendanagea, or Joseph Brant, a proud chief and Empire Loyalist, built his home on the shores of Lake Ontario just a stone's throw away from Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital. Burlington is a community that offers diverse, successful business opportunities, recrea-

tion and safe communities. Burlington is a great place to live, work and play.

In many ways, my political career evolved from my volunteer work, where I learned that through listening and taking action, positive change can happen. Communication, transparency, accountability and integrity have always been important to me in both my personal and public lives. That is why it was critical to me that the position of the regional chairman be directly elected by the people, chosen by the residents of Halton democratically, and it is with pride that I look back on that accomplishment.

I was a proud member of team Halton. Regional council, our CAO, Brent Marshall, and his staff worked tirelessly to create a great quality of life for our residents. I've always been fortunate to work alongside very talented and committed people—people who bring passion, commitment and vision to the workplace every day.

My decision to leave municipal politics was not an easy one. I had made myself a promise years ago that I would leave when I still enjoyed the job and I felt like I was still making a contribution. But the time was right for me to not seek re-election to the position of regional chairman in 2006. I was then encouraged to consider putting my name forward to stand for MPP in Burlington. After careful consideration, I decided to seek the PC nomination, a decision that has brought me new and exciting experiences.

There are many issues that concern the proud people of Burlington, and I will briefly draw your attention to some of those today. We have great concern about the time this current government has taken to respond to the proposal of the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital renewal plan. The renewal plan has been under review by the Ministry of Health for three and a half years, the entire time this government has been in power.

I suppose it was by coincidence that right after I publicly and repetitively raised this issue during the recent by-election, the government announced \$1.5 million in design funding.

We, the people of Burlington, believed that the McGuinty health tax would be an answer to the government's funding shortfalls for the critical projects that exist in our communities. Burlington taxpayers will have paid over \$100 million in health tax and yet the project for our hospital does not even appear on the government's list of priority projects for hospitals.

In that same time period, it was a disappointment that 60 beds were forced to close as a result of McGuinty government policies and that Burlington residents are currently waiting an average of more than eight hours in emergency rooms. On any day of the week, the hospital has an average of 20 admitted patients waiting 24 hours or more for a bed. In addition, this purposeful avoidance has tied the hands of the dedicated volunteers who are ready to start raising half the cost of this project.

Burlington residents deserve better, and Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital should receive the money for their renewal project. This is the right thing to do.

In addition, Burlington residents and I share a concern that in the 2003 election Mr. McGuinty promised the parents of autistic children increased funding. Instead, parents of autistic children cruelly found themselves in court fighting for the very promise that had been made to them just months earlier. The programs for autistic children should be funded as promised because that is the right thing to do.

Throughout my career, I have been an advocate for the need for transparency in government processes and a seamless access to government as well as accountability for all elected officials and their staffs. We should be held accountable for the promises we make and the actions we take. So I cannot express to you more strongly the disappointment that I feel that Premier McGuinty and Minister Caplan do not feel the same need for transparency, access to government and accountability of elected officials. That is why I support John Tory's suggestion that a standing committee of the Legislature be struck to probe beyond the mandate of the Ombudsman and the OPP investigation to deal with who in the Premier's office and the minister's office knew what, when they knew it, and what were their actions. This is the right thing to do.

I was disappointed yet again that in the most recent budget, in spite of a \$3-billion surplus, the delivery dates of funding for many of the programs are so far into the future that they are beyond the mandate of the McGuinty government. That money belongs to the taxpayers of Burlington and of Ontario, and it should be used now to benefit people. That is the right thing to do.

Finally, I look forward to working with my colleagues to create good policies and programs for all Ontarians. Having been in politics since 1982, having seen seven Premiers in three different governments, I know the characteristics of a good leader. Leadership is defined by vision and integrity. Vision is knowing which road to take and integrity is having the courage to take it. It is a privilege to be part of a team whose leader exemplifies those characteristics and who will act on his promises because that is the right thing to do.

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I am proud to be part of the John Tory team, the PC team of the future, the team that will make promises that will be kept because that is the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Marchese: I wanted to thank the member from Burlington on her remarks. It was a very useful history to have, in fact. I just want to thank her for the speech that she made. I learned a great deal.

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): I too want to congratulate and thank the member from Burlington for her comments. I want to also welcome her to this great place, the Ontario Legislature.

The bill we're speaking about this evening deals with something that I think is very important to your constituents in Burlington, and that has to do with safeguarding and sustaining Ontario's water. That is a tremendous need that we have in this province and a tremendous

responsibility that we have, because this act is going to strengthen Ontario's ability to protect and conserve the water of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.

I certainly hope that the member, who knows that it's very important to her constituents, will support this bill in the interest of clean water and protecting our water.

I come from an area called Sarnia-Lambton. That area happens to be at the tip of Lake Huron, and we have the St. Clair River. It's very important to us that we prohibit in this legislation transfers out of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. I think it's important because we have to protect our most vital resource.

I remember—and, Speaker, you remember—we had a time, unfortunately, when the Conservatives were in power, that we had the worst record in the context of hazardous waste in this province. We were the only jurisdiction in North America that used to landfill untreated hazardous waste, and that changed. We're really pleased that we brought in the rules that we now have to treat hazardous waste before we landfill it.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I want to say thank you and congratulations to our colleague from Burlington, Joyce Savoline. I'm sure your experience and background have brought you to be the excellent candidate that you were in our by-election, and the excellent member that you are and will be for Burlington, here in the Legislative Assembly.

On behalf of the John Tory team and the PC caucus, and I'm sure all members, welcome to Queen's Park. Thank you very much for not quitting public life, even though you've been in public life since 1982. Thank you for offering yourself here on behalf of the province and the people of Burlington.

You mentioned some of your local issues, and you've done that from the heart, not because you were just elected to the Ontario Legislature, but for years as regional chair and for years serving on council. You've always stood up for Joseph Brant Hospital and for those facilities, and you certainly put them on the map in the by-election. I know you'll continue to do so here, and we wish you well.

I toured those facilities back in the mid-1990s, when I was Minister of Health, and was always very, very proud of the work that the doctors, nurses, staff and health care professionals did at Joseph Brant.

Autistic children: I know that comes from the heart too. When many of us were encouraged, actually—and I'm sure many people in Ontario believed the Premier, when he was running to be Premier of this province—and believed the Liberal candidates when they were going to do far more than Mike Harris's or Ernie Eves's government ever did for autistic children, it turns out that they've had those children and those parents in court as recently as last week. We saw the court case again and it's been a disgrace, frankly, the way they've handled that issue.

So I want to say to you and your family, Joyce, thank you to your husband, thank you to your family for allowing you and supporting you here in your endeavours

at Queen's Park. We wish you well. I can't believe that you're so thoughtful about your childhood. What you and Rita went through must have been something that I couldn't even imagine. But you've made a new home—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I do want to welcome the new member for Burlington. She follows in some very distinguished footsteps. I think of George Kerr, who played such a significant role in the Robarts and Davis administrations, followed by Cam Jackson, who's now the mayor of Burlington, and now the new member for Burlington, who has, I know, a very distinguished and long career in municipal politics in the region of Halton. It's interesting she noted having spent time in Israel in 1948 and 1949, which from a historical perspective would have been very interesting, because the state of Israel came into being, of course, in 1948 as a result of the very tragic circumstances surrounding the Holocaust in Europe from 1930 to 1945.

I know she touched briefly on Bill 198, and it's interesting, of course, that Burlington is so dependent—its commerce and activities—on protecting Great Lakes waters. When you think about it, the Great Lakes contain 95% of North America's fresh water supply; 70% of Ontario's urban residents take their drinking water from the Great Lakes proper, and 95% of Ontarians take their drinking water from the Great Lakes basin. The Great Lakes, we know, are significant in powering Canada's economic engine. They support 45% of Canada's industrial activity and 25% of Canada's agricultural production. I think of such businesses as Maple Leaf Foods, which I think is headquartered in Burlington, and of course Wallace McCain, who runs that organization, has very extensive exports throughout the world and uses the Great Lakes as a way to ship those products ultimately to their end markets, so—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Member for Burlington has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Savoline: It has been a pleasure in the last four weeks to be here and to learn and to watch, and I look forward to the next few months as we move into government.

The bill that we have before us today deals with a very critical issue. The entire world cannot live without water. We can live without food, but we can't live without water. What a resource that's been given to us to pass on as a legacy to future generations. I want the House to know that in Halton we have the best record of water treatment, and have had for some 20 years, before it was ever popular to use new regulations and further treatment processes, the best record of purifying water when it comes in from the lake and for treating water before it's discharged into the lake. We stand proud with that record. We did that by developing our own processes and initiatives that we have proudly shared with other communities so that safe water can also be part of their community's benefit.

Water is, as I said, something that we can't live without, and I think that it behooves us all, regardless of party politics—it's one of these "park your politics at the door" issues—to come to grips with the issue and deal with the water in a way that's safe for all Ontarians, because it doesn't matter which party you belong to, the water needs to be a priority issue.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

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Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure and privilege this afternoon to make some remarks on the government's initiative that purports to deal with water taking in the province of Ontario. I say it's my privilege, because recently the Polaris Institute came out with a significant critique of the bill, so I'm warning members and viewers now that much of my remarks are going to rely on that very august group's analysis of the bill and their concerns with it.

I think that members of activist communities across Ontario—certainly the ones in the city I come from, as well as other people who are active on environmental and justice issues—are very aware of the work of the Polaris Institute. Some people are not, so I thought it would be appropriate to preface my remarks by describing briefly from their website exactly what the mandate of this particular organization is, because I will be relying so heavily on their extremely thorough review of the bill and the implications of the direction the government has chosen to take. If I may say, it's a direction they have chosen to take when the tide is going out on the mandate of this government—a bit of a water pun here.

Interjections.

Ms. Horwath: Everybody here is very excited about my puns, I can see. Nonetheless, it's not a laughing matter. As members would know, it's not a laughing matter. It's a very serious issue.

The Polaris Institute is an organization whose stated objective is "to enable citizen movements to re-skill and retool themselves to fight for democratic social change in an age of corporate-driven globalization. Essentially, the institute works with citizen movements in developing the kinds of strategies and tactics required to unmask and challenge the corporate power that is the driving force behind governments concerning public policy-making on economic, social and environmental issues." It goes on to say, "In so doing, the institute serves as a catalyst with constituency-based social movements, increasing their capacity to do their own strategic campaign planning on issues of vital concern to their members and allies."

For people who haven't seen what their logo looks like, it's quite interesting. I was kind of interested myself in exactly what the symbolism of the logo on their letterhead meant, so I went to try to find that. Of course, their website talks about that symbol. It says, "The Polaris logo is meant to symbolize this *raison d'être*. The term 'Polaris' itself refers to original Greek word for the North Star. Just as ships lost at sea have often turned to the North Star to guide them home, the Polaris Institute tries

to provide a compass for social movements in this new age of corporate-driven globalization."

If you go on the website or if you receive correspondence from the Polaris Institute, you'll note that a part of their letterhead and of their logo is this star that shines. The whole point of that star—I think this is a term that's been coming up lately in this House—is that it's shining a light, but the light is actually a beacon of hope that there are some ways we can make not only the economy but decisions around environmental and social movements ones that are beneficial to the largest number of people as opposed to only the corporate bottom line.

Certainly it was with great interest that the letter came over my desk today, and I'm going to read it into the record because I think that, section by section and issue by issue as I go through it, those of you watching at home and those of you tuning in in this Legislature and perhaps in the building will find that the issues they raise in this letter are extremely thought-provoking. Certainly I hope that by reading this into the record, the government will take into consideration some of these very real concerns.

It's an open letter that was published on April 12, and it's titled, "Water Privatization by Permit: Open Letter on the proposed 'Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act.'"

"Dear friends of water,

"Please consider the following and share your own comments with officials before the May 3 deadline.

"Last week, the province of Ontario released yet another piece of legislation that fails to adequately safeguard water. This most recent attempt is called the 'Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act' (SSOWA).

"Although there was much bravado around the revelation of this new legislation, it's not really anything new. It is Ontario's implementation of what started out as the Great Lakes Charter Annex a few years ago, renamed the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Compact and" Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources "Agreement, and signed by US Great Lakes governors and Ontario and Quebec Premiers in December 2005.

"Prior to and since the signing of this agreement, water activists have raised concerns largely because the agreement fails to protect our water resources from private interests and foreign expropriation. Unfortunately, Ontario's implementation version, released last week, does not appear to deal with many key concerns.

"The following are ways in which Ontario's SSOWA falls short of protecting Ontario water."

There are some—I've just given you the warning—seven points that they outline, as well as a conclusion. Again, I am going to continue reading this information into the record.

"(1) Although eliminating the diversion of water from the Great Lakes basin is a major concern for water activists, the SSOWA allows water in containers under 20 litres to be exempt from prohibitions on diversion. This includes most of the bottled water that is being extracted from the Great Lakes basin in Ontario by Coca-

Cola, Pepsi, Nestlé and Aquafarms 93 (which bottles for other retail outlets including Wal-Mart, Shoppers Drug Mart, and Loblaws). This industry is growing annually by 18% in Canada, and bottled water is transported outside the province and outside of Canada.

“(2) The SSOWA gives ultimate decision-making power on bulk water diversions to a tribunal with no assurance that the people of Ontario or the public interest are adequately represented. While the makeup of the tribunal is not clarified in the SSOWA, it may very well be a tribunal appointed by the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Water Resources Regional Body, made up primarily of the US Great Lakes governors, thus compromising the people of Ontario’s final say in the management of our water resources.

“(3) The SSOWA, in keeping with the annex agreement, allows straddling US counties to divert water from the Great Lakes basin. As well, SSOWA continues to allow the major Chicago diversion of Great Lakes water to the Mississippi basin and to the water-hungry US southern and western states. The pressure for increasing the volume of these diversions will only increase in coming years.

“(4) The SSOWA allows water to be transferred ‘by the operating authority of a municipal drinking water system ... or by any other person’—that’s right in the bill, subclause 34.6(2)(ii)—‘in and around the Great Lakes basin, including to the US side. Once this water reaches the US side, it likely’—

Mr. Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I don’t believe there’s a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker: I don’t believe there is either. Would the table check?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: Quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I’ll return to the member for Hamilton East.

Ms. Horwath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, this is the fourth point on the critique by the Polaris Institute on the government’s water-taking bill.

“Once this water reaches the US side, it likely falls under article 1.8.3 of the US Constitution (the commerce clause), which can be used to challenge a state’s limitation on interstate water exports. It’s also important that we clarify how this proposed legislation could leave Ontario’s water resources open to NAFTA investor state challenges. What is clear is that loosening legislation around transfers and diversions increases the susceptibility of our water resources to NAFTA and the US commerce clause. As such, we need to develop stronger prohibitions on water transfers and diversions.

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“A return flow provision is included in article 34.6(3)1. Essentially this means that a permit holder could be required to return a portion of the water it takes

from the Great Lakes watershed. While some organizations have argued that this provision will function as a deterrent to would-be diverters, private water companies that operate water and sewage systems have argued that their ‘sewage returns’ are acceptable forms of water return.

“(5) The proposed bill allows for the transfer of water-taking permits between different parties, as long as they get the approval of an appointed Ministry of the Environment director. The director’s signature will allow companies running water, hydro and other industrial and commercial enterprises to buy and sell their water-taking permits. This could occur even between public water systems and the private sector. This opens the door to permit speculation, increasing the value of permits as corporate assets in mergers and acquisitions.” Talk to me about that, coming from the city of Hamilton, where our waste water system was run by a private company for many years, far too long. “The solution is not just to require ministry approval on permit transfers, as proposed, but a complete prohibition on permit transfers altogether. New permit holders and ‘related transferors’ should be required to obtain new permits when changes in company ownership occur.

“(6) The SSOWA also fails to name water as a public trust. Instead, it refers to water as a public ‘treasure.’ The legal distinctions here are critical. There is a long history of public trust and common law principles pertaining to water in Canada that limits appropriation of water for private profit. Calling water a ‘treasure’ purposefully detours around these legal principles so that historical traditions upholding water as a commons and public trust can be disregarded. We need to retain the term ‘public trust’ within SSOWA in order to establish the direct application of these laws in protecting Ontario’s water from privatization.

“(7) The SSOWA shifts water use priorities. In Ontario’s earlier water-taking regulations, domestic users were given priority in water use, followed by farming, with industrial and commercial interests considered last. Under the SSOWA, water-taking and diversion permits may be approved simply because the permit seeker’s other options for accessing water are not deemed to be ‘cost effective.’ ‘Cost’ is not defined in the SSOWA, and appears to be strictly limited to profit rather than a more realistic assessment that includes costs to environment, human health, and the public costs associated with diversion and trade in our water.” Very short-sighted, if I might add that as an aside.

“Further, the SSOWA in its first statement identifies ‘economic’ uses of water as a top priority.” So again as an aside, the government members like to wax on about how important this water bill is, but if you look at the details, you’ll find that they’re really not looking after our interests; they’re looking after interests that are more corporately driven.

“In short, the current draft of the SSOWA needs to be reformed to ensure it does not serve to hand the public

trust in water over to private interests and further open up our water resources to foreign expropriation.”

I missed part of a paragraph which says, “Further, the SSOWA in its first statement identifies ‘economic’ uses of water as a top priority.” They go on to say, “Without stating that water is a human and ecosystem right, and a public trust, the SSOWA paves the way for ‘economic rights’ to carry the field, particularly in the context of NAFTA and other trade legislation....”

“The SSOWA is particularly disconcerting when we review it in the context of other recent draft regulations tabled by the government of Ontario.

“For example, this past winter the province of Ontario released its first discussion paper on the new Clean Water Act. The paper detailed the proposed makeup of the regional source protection committees ... which will be responsible for watershed planning under the new act. The province has proposed that industrial and commercial stakeholders make up one third of the committees. This is the first time industry representatives and companies operating—but not necessarily residing—in a region will be formally involved in the watershed planning: defining what activities constitute water ‘threats,’ or not; deciding who should get water-taking and water pollution permits; and developing long-term water management plans for each watershed in this province.

“Given the proposed structure, some residents are also concerned that the SPCs—the source protection committees—“will likely find it necessary to contract comprehensive planning services out to external private consulting corporations, further privatizing water resource management in Ontario.

“In another example last week—at the same time that the provincial government released the SSOWA—the Minister of the Environment announced a new charge on water takings.” This has been raised by my colleagues and others in the House already. “The amount proposed for water bottlers—a whole \$3.71 per million litres—is so minimal it will neither reduce water takings nor return any significant funds to pursue our social and environmental goals. Instead the funds will be diverted to the above-mentioned SPCs, co-managed by private interests. The deadline for comments on that proposal is in June. We will be providing a more detailed analysis of this proposal in time for you”—people interested in water—to submit comments” to the government.

Again, this is straight from the Polaris Institute’s letter. They’re soliciting for people to get engaged in this issue because it’s an extremely important one.

“What we are witnessing in Ontario”—I think this is extremely succinct in terms of their conclusion here, and it’s really important that people take the time to hear the perspective of this very well-respected organization in regards to the government’s activities—“is the quiet restructuring of water resource management. This includes: (1) giving private interests an equal footing with the government and the community in defining watershed risk and the basis for granting water taking and water pollution permits; (2) allowing for the diversion of Great Lakes water for bottled water companies and others;

(3) opening the door for foreign diversion of Ontario water, used by private interests for profit; and finally (4) defining water in ways that give private interests the legal right to exploit it.

“While the Minister of the Environment is proudly introducing so-called environmental legislation in time for November’s election, the actual implications of these policies are the secession of water resources to domestic and foreign water privateers and the erosion of public management and control. The problematic elements in Ontario’s draft SSOWA need to be changed to uphold water as a public trust, a right of humans and ecosystems, and a sacred source of life.”

They go on to then encourage people to write in to the Minister of the Environment in order to put on the record some of the concerns that are coming forward from themselves and from others who are interested in the water issue.

I have to say, I had been through our researcher’s notes and the leadoff speech from our critic and looked at some of the other information that was available on various websites and from various sources, but I could not find a more succinct and articulate description of what the risks are if the government continues on the path that it’s currently on in terms of water taking.

It’s funny; when I was first given the privilege and the honour of coming to this place and representing the residents of Hamilton East, a very vigorous community in terms of the rights of individuals and workers and people to enjoy a decent environment and a decent standard of living, one of the things that was on the top of the agenda was some of these kinds of environmental initiatives. I can remember my colleague Marilyn Churley, a woman who was here for quite some time as our environmental critic and who was at that time the member for Toronto–Danforth, was quite critical of the government at that time—and that was, Jeez, some three years ago now—because they were dragging their feet on the whole water-taking permit issue.

So here we are—and I’m going to repeat it again—at the ebbing tide of this government. We’ve used a lot of phrases to describe where we are in terms of this government’s rule or power over the province. So this is the ebbing tide—

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): That was a good one, “ebbing tide.”

Ms. Horwath: Thank you. That’s my friend from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot.

Anyway, it’s the ebbing tide of the government’s mandate, and at the last minute, they throw on this piece of legislation, trying to pretend that it’s some great, wonderful piece of legislation that’s going to do so many great things in terms of protecting our water and making sure that there’s real, strong enforcement of water-taking rights and permits. And you know what? It’s just not that.

I think the Polaris Institute’s description is very clear. I agree with it completely. The government needs to make sure they do the right thing here, not just the expedient, political thing.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Leal: I listened to the speech by the member from Hamilton East, but I'd certainly like to remind her—I just happen to have my copy of the report of the Walkerton inquiry by Justice O'Connor and I would like to refer to chapter 11, if I could:

"Beginning in 1992-93 and continuing until 1997-98, the budget of the Ministry of the Environment ... underwent very substantial reductions. The first series of reductions occurred in the early to mid-1990s. Between 1991-92 to 1995-96, the MOE's annual budget estimates fell by approximately 30% and total annual expenditures decreased by about \$210 million." Well, we know the member from Hamilton East and five of the members are still sitting across the aisle from that train wreck of 1990 to 1995.

Let's look at what Bill 198 is all about. Bill 198 is about enshrining the Great Lakes agreement, which commits Great Lakes states and provinces to manage and regulate water withdrawals, consumptive uses and diversions in order to protect and conserve the waters of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River basin. Consumptive use is the portion of water taken that is lost and not returned to the water basin due to evaporation, incorporation into products or crops, consumption by livestock or humans and other processes. This position varies for different types of water uses. To assist in estimating the consumptive use of the Great Lakes, coefficients have been defined for each sector based on the work of the Great Lakes Commission, the United States Geological Survey, individual jurisdictions and other research.

Bill 198 goes a long way to safeguarding and sustaining the water, particularly in the Great Lakes basin and the surrounding watersheds that are so dependent on the Great Lakes. Bill 198 is an important initiative that this government feels is important to bring forward at this time. I think all members of this House should get on board and pass this legislation.

I can tell you, I take no lectures from the member from Hamilton East when you look at their dismal record with the Ministry of the Environment from 1990 to 1995.

Mr. Chudleigh: You can try to spin this bill any way you like, but this is just another tax, and this time it's a tax on water, which is rather sad in this province of Ontario. In our history, going back to the first settlements in—I guess we're talking about the 1560s when they first settled in LaSalle. I think LaSalle was the first European settlement in Ontario, on the shores of the Detroit River. Since that time, there has never been a charge for water coming out of Ontario's freshwater resource. We do pay for water. We have a water bill. Everybody knows you pay for water. You pay for its transportation, you pay for its cleaning, you pay for its purification and you pay for its disposal, but there has never been a charge for the water itself.

This bill will change that. This bill will inherently change the way Ontarians are treated when it comes to their use of the water resources of this province. That's a pretty serious issue when you consider that for 400 years,

the people of this province have never been charged for their water.

You can spin this any way you want, but it's going to be a tax, a new Liberal tax, on water. That's a fundamental difference to the way we have always operated in Ontario when it comes to the most precious resource we have: fresh, clean, pure water, which Ontario has a huge abundance of. But when it comes to taxes, you know that Liberals cannot resist a new tax. After all, this is the party that understands that the take-home pay of the average Ontarian is just unused tax room.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment briefly on the fine speech by the member for Hamilton East and to say a few words regarding the bill before us today.

I think we need to be clear about one thing: The regulatory charge that the government is placing on the transfer of water is a charge; it's not a tax. The revenue collected from the charge would be used to cover a portion of the province's costs of managing water resources. We're talking here about moving water between the different lakes in the Great Lakes region and in the St. Lawrence basin. There is a cost associated with that. The government—the taxpayers—should not bear that cost. If an industry or commercial user is going to be moving some of that water, they should pay that cost, not the taxpayer. By placing this regulatory charge, the government is saying that industries and commercial users have to pay if they want to use quantities of water for their business, not the taxpayer. I think that's got to be made clear. Some of the people who have spoken here today have said it's another tax. We're not going to see a tax bill on our individual home water. What we're going to see is industry paying for what industry is doing: taking water out of the Great Lakes or transferring that water.

The proposed changes are in line with what other jurisdictions in North America charge per million litres, because we see this happening in other parts of North America and in the United States as well. So this bill, which I spoke to the other day, is innovative and important, and I support it as I stand here today and speak in favour of it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

I'll return to the member from Hamilton East for her reply.

Ms. Horwath: I want to thank the member from Peterborough, the member from Halton and the member from Scarborough Southwest for their comments, although I don't recall that much of anything anybody said had to do with the really important critique I read into the record from the Polaris Institute. That saddens me, quite frankly, because it seems like the government is already closing its ears to some really important issues that are being brought before it in regard to this bill.

I think it's really important that everybody around here is at least on the same page around the importance of protecting our water and preventing it from being abused and depleted to the point where it is no longer sustaining our communities. Certainly it's a goal that I

believe every one of us shares quite well. But it's not good enough to put a bill forward, close your ears to criticism and wave around political platitudes and political rhetoric on something of such import.

I would certainly say that it's not appropriate to bring this bill forward at such a late date, in the dying days of the government; in fact I think it's reprehensible. The member from Scarborough Southwest talked about how every other jurisdiction puts fees on water taking. Well, lo and behold, this government has been promising it for three years. When they finally say they're going to maybe do it, if in fact the bill gets through the process of the House because they waited till the last minute, the bottom line is, it's a paltry amount of some \$3.17 for some gazillion litres of water. And then, to add insult to injury, it's not even implemented till 2009. So don't tell me, Liberal government, that you really give a darn about this issue. You waited until the last minute, and now you're not even listening to the real, serious criticisms that are out there, and that is shameful when this is such a very important issue.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): At this time, I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 155, An Act to provide for a referendum on Ontario's electoral system / Projet de loi, Loi prévoyant un référendum sur le système électoral de l'Ontario.

Bill 188, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 / projet de loi, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2007.

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SAFEGUARDING AND SUSTAINING ONTARIO'S WATER ACT, 2007 (continued)

LOI DE 2007 SUR LA SAUVEGARDE ET LA DURABILITÉ DES EAUX DE L'ONTARIO (suite)

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): This is a very significant issue, a very significant bill, and I wasn't aware I was going to be speaking this afternoon. I would have liked to have more time to speak on this bill, as it has such a wide impact on all of us and it's so important; it's great. The Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act would amend the Ontario Water Resources Act. It's a major step forward to protect our waters.

Just read the preamble: "The conservation, protection and management of Ontario's waters and their efficient and sustainable use are matters of vital importance to the people of Ontario. The people of other jurisdictions that depend on the waters of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin share similar concerns. With this in mind, the Premiers of Ontario and Quebec and the governors of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin signed the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement in December 2005."

So it's recognized not only by ourselves in Canada, Ontario and Quebec; it's recognized by eight states which surround the Great Lakes as being so important. With climate change coming, these resources will be put under further impacts.

I'd just like to read from Plan B 2.0: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble, by Lester Brown. It's just something that I'd read in the last few weeks, and I thought I would refer to it today to get across some of the issues across the world that are similar to the ones we have here.

I'll just read from this: "Africa's Lake Chad, once a landmark for astronauts circling the earth, is now difficult for them to locate. Surrounded by Chad, Niger, and Nigeria—three countries with some of the world's fastest-growing populations—the lake has shrunk by 95% since the 1960s." This is a major lake, and it's down to that size. "The soaring demand for irrigation water in that area is draining dry the rivers and streams the lake depends on for its existence. As a result, Lake Chad may soon disappear entirely..."

We have huge, huge water resources in the Great Lakes. When you think of it, from Kingston up to Thunder Bay I think we're talking about something like 2,000 kilometres of waterway. So it's easy to think, as was mentioned, that has Canada abundant resources, and my concern is that under the present direction of our federal government, we might want to give those away because we think we have too much of them. I think that is really important.

The link between water and food is very strong. Just to get to the comparison, "We each drink on average nearly four liters of water per day in one form or another, while the water required to produce our daily food totals at least 2,000 liters—500 times as much." That's where the water resources are being compromised very quickly. "This helps explain why 70% of all water use is for one purpose—irrigation. Another 20% is used by industry, and 10% goes for residential purposes." So what we consume and what we use in our daily lives is 10%. What we're looking at as the major problem of water resources is the irrigation water.

Countries that are over-pumping their aquifers now—Canada's not included—include China, India, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, the United States and Yemen, a total of 3.2 billion people. I think that's approximately half of the world's population, so there are major concerns around the world.

In our own area, in our own bailiwick, the US Ogallala aquifer is being over-pumped a great deal. We're getting into situations where, is it food production we want, or will the cities be getting the water? I think that is a very serious situation for Canada to be concerned with in the future. How much demand will there be for our abundant water? We must be very conscious of the fact that in other parts of the world, rivers are running dry.

The Colorado River often doesn't reach the sea. The Yellow River in China often doesn't reach the sea. These are things that are happening as we slowly take the forest cover off our lands. The retention of water is not there, and the uses of water continue all the time.

Overall, China's grain production has fallen from its historic peak of 392 million tonnes in 1998 to an estimated 358 million tonnes in 2005. For perspective, this drop of 34 million tonnes exceeds the annual Canadian wheat harvest. Their production of wheat is dropping because of the lack of irrigation water. This is something that's happening right across the world.

I was born along the Ottawa River, which is a river that has a major watershed right up into Quebec. Some of the things that we saw along the Ottawa River in the last 40 or 50 years that I've been around—you used to be able to swim in the Ottawa River. Then there was a great length of time when the pollution was too great and you couldn't swim in the Ottawa River. Then we started getting better laws in and respecting our water more, and we were seeing that the water quality improved again.

I'll just speak about the beach on Petrie Island in my own community of Orléans. Petrie Island Beach is a new beach; it's a beautiful beach in Orléans. But last year, because of significant short-term storms, because of water temperatures going up and because of lower flows generally, something happened to the water. The beach often gets closed, as all Ottawa beaches do—

Mrs. Savoline: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We have a visitor who can't stay long and will be with us only a short while, so I beg indulgence for the interruption. We have with us the former MPP for Burlington, Cam Jackson, and the current mayor.

The Acting Speaker: Welcome. It's not a point of order, but an interesting point of information.

Mr. McNeely: I think I recognize the gentleman.

So things have changed. Last year, our beach, rather than being closed the average 15 days a year, was closed something like 46 days of the year. There are local scientists, river keepers who are looking at it and thinking maybe the closings were part of climate change: the warmer water, the more intense storms. A lot of the city of Ottawa's sanitary and storm sewers are combined, and when you get a major event, you get flushing of raw sewage into the Ottawa River. That impacts us downstream. So I think the people of central Ottawa will have to look at cleaning up their act a bit. While they do, we're repositioning our beach for sailboats, kayaking and canoeing so that the water use will continue, but the activity of swimming at our beach is not the same as it was before.

So we have to protect our environment a lot more than we have in the past. That's what this piece of legislation is doing. It's a major step forward. It's certainly a major step forward from what the two previous governments did.

John Tory is really good at saying one thing in urban Ontario and singing a different tune to rural Ontarians. The Conservatives are the party of Walkerton and the party of environmental cuts and neglect. Under John Tory, the Conservatives repeatedly refused to take a firm stand on our environment. Instead, they are racing backwards with Randy Hillier, a poster boy for those who oppose a cleaner, greener future for Ontario. That is very scary here because we have to protect our water. It's scaremongering, because the member for Erie-Lincoln said when he was up something about, "This is going to impact farmers." Farmers are exempt from this. They're exempted from the charge. This is certainly not that, so don't get rural Ontario—it's just as important to protect their interests, because with over-pumping of aquifers, in the end all the people run out of water. So you can't get to that.

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I'd just like to say that in my own community of Orléans on Saturday, April 21, which is Climate Change Awareness Day—it's not recognized legally yet, but it's certainly that—we have a climate change challenge. We have 10 high schools, and seven of them are participating. There's a poster contest. It's trying to get the young people to see where they can play their part in doing something very important for our environment. These are great posters that are coming in. The judging has already been done. I haven't seen the posters—I wasn't back—but we had very eminent judges to do it. So we'll have an occasion on Saturday at 1 o'clock in Orléans in the shopping centre, the Orléans plaza, where they will be getting Polar Bear awards. I think the Polar Bear award is a good indication of one of our species that's in very much trouble. So I'm looking forward to that. I'm really pleased that the school kids seem to be ahead of their parents on many of these issues. They are going to be the leaders and they are going to change all these things.

The worst thing we can think about our Great Lakes is an abundance of water. "Abundance" suggests that we should sell it; "abundance" suggests there will be a lot of people who will want to take it. So we have to be very careful with the "abundance" bit. I heard that twice from the opposition today, and it's a scary word because when you see rivers that don't flow to the sea anymore and you see huge lakes that have disappeared, you have to consider that abundance has to be looked at very carefully. We have to protect our water for the uses that we need in the future. The water levels are under stress because of climate change. They are showing that there will be major reductions in the water levels. This will impact property owners all along.

I'd just like to finish by looking at some of the costs. This is just a comparison that this author, Lester R. Brown, does:

To reforest the earth, bring it back to where it's sustainable, would be \$6 billion a year. To protect the topsoil on croplands would cost \$24 billion a year. Restoring the rangelands would be \$9 billion a year. Stabilizing water tables: \$10 billion a year—and of course, that's reforestation; that's reduced pumping. Restoring fisheries: \$13 billion a year. Protecting biological diversity: \$31 billion a year.

This government is proactive. We had the bill for biological diversity through here, the Endangered Species Act. So we're working in the right direction on this. But that would all cost \$93 billion a year. I'd just like to let you know that the United States spends \$500 billion on defence, and the world spends \$975 billion on defence. So for 10% to 15% of those dollars that are being wasted to kill people, we could restore this great earth.

This bill, which is in the right direction, is taking us to the stage where we're protecting these great resources of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence and making sure we don't get into the situation where we have insufficient water, because "abundance of water" has to be taken in the context of who wants it and how much of it they want. I'd just like to make sure that we support this bill and we move forward in protecting our water.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Hudak: I'm pleased to rise and respond to the member for Ottawa—Orléans' comments with respect to the bill before the assembly this evening. The member spoke of a number of environmental issues, and obviously he is very concerned about a number of those issues, so I commend him for that.

I don't think he meant to go so far as to say that defence spending is wasteful. Maybe he did. Maybe he thought that it was all wasted, or just a cut in the defence budget—as part of questions and comments, I'll ask the question. Your last comments had indicated that—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: No, he talked about how all the spending—the American budget as well as other countries' spending on defence—was wasteful. I'm just curious if he means that it's all wasteful or if he just wants to see it reduced substantially or altogether to put into the Ministry of the Environment. I'd ask for some clarification from the member in that respect.

The other question I'd ask the member to respond to is, there have been a number of Liberal members who have talked about potentially metering or taxing wells in the province.

Mr. McMeekin: Name names.

Mr. Hudak: There were a number of speeches today.

Mr. McMeekin: Names. Who?

Mr. Hudak: The member from Northumberland was talking about it in his speech.

Mr. McMeekin: He said he wouldn't do it.

Mr. Hudak: If he said he wouldn't do it, hopefully he will oppose that plan within the Liberal caucus and stand behind his words. I want assurances from the member that there is no secret plan by Dalton McGuinty to im-

pose meters or new taxes on private water wells in the province of Ontario as part of this legislation.

My other question, as part of questions and comments, is how the particular tax that the government has talked about was brought about. I forget the exact—\$3.71 per million litres is the proposal that the McGuinty government has spoken about. It was obviously not a number picked out of a hat, so I was wondering what the justification was for that particular value.

Ms. Horwath: I'm pleased to make a few remarks on the member from Ottawa—Orléans's remarks today. It's interesting, because some of the things he was raising absolutely reflect a recent article that has come out of the UN, out of a bit of a conference that they had: "Climate change could diminish North American water supplies and trigger disputes between the United States and Canada over water reserves already stressed by industry and agriculture, UN experts said on Wednesday." That's April 12.

"More heat waves like those that killed more than 100 people in the United States in 2006, storms like the killer hurricanes that struck the Gulf of Mexico in 2005, and wildfires are likely in North America as temperatures rise, according to a new report that provided regional details on a UN climate panel study on global warming issued in Brussels on April 6."

So I think you're on the right track in terms of some of you reflecting on some of the natural conditions that are occurring around the world and the fact that that has a lot to do with the way we're depleting our resources, like water. But what does this government choose to do? I'm taking this from another article, that was published in the Toronto Star. This is a quote from the Canadian Environmental Law Association: "It's not going to have a huge impact in terms of actually resulting in water conservation." That's what the Canadian Environmental Law Association's executive director, Ramani Nadarajah, said, adding that "the United Kingdom charges \$250 for a million litres of water"—way different than your \$3.17. This article goes on to say: "In the 2003 election, the Liberals promised to 'stop allowing companies to raid our precious water supplies,' and now they are scrambling to get something in place before the next election campaign."

All that we on this side of the House are asking, at least in the NDP caucus, is: Make sure you don't make a big, huge mistake with this legislation. It's far too important for you to shortchange the people of Ontario in protecting their water.

Mr. Leal: The member from Ottawa—Orléans, of course, is not only here as the MPP for that riding. Certainly his great work as a city councillor in Ottawa over many years has been in the vanguard of advocating policies, both municipally and here at the provincial level, dealing with issues like climate change and protection of our water resources. I know he had a private member's resolution about declaring a climate change day to heighten awareness. His speech articulated his

desire to see Bill 198 pass so that we can move forcefully to protect water in the Great Lakes basin.

I'd just like to get a couple of quotes in from third party endorsements of Bill 198:

"As the provider of safe drinking water, cities have a great interest in preserving, protecting and restoring the ecosystem health of the Great Lakes. This binational agreement is an important first step in ensuring that all governments around the Great Lakes basin work together to protect this invaluable resource."

The author of that quote was a former member of the New Democratic Party, the mayor of the city of Toronto, David Miller, who has obviously seen the light in supporting profound initiatives like Bill 198. I applaud him for his support of Bill 198.

1650

Secondly, I'll get a quote in from Robert Wright, senior counsel for the Sierra Legal Defence Fund: "With these legislative amendments, our Premier and Minister Ramsay are continuing Ontario's leadership role in protecting the Great Lakes for future generations."

Rick Findlay, the director of the water program for Pollution Probe: "This proposed legislation is a good step forward for Ontario and for all who live in the Great Lakes basin. It demonstrates positive leadership by the province and reflects the importance of protecting Ontario's water resources sustainably for future generations."

There are many more third parties that are coming on board to support this very important piece of legislation.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I appreciate the talk given by my colleague, but there are a few recommendations that were made by Justice Dennis O'Connor in the report of the Walkerton inquiry in May 2002 that he didn't mention.

Unfortunately, though this government, the McGuinty government, has said to the public that they were going to accept and adopt all of the recommendations, there seem to be a fair number that they haven't adopted, even though the report was out in May 2002.

Let's take recommendation 35, which says, "As part of an asset management program, lead service lines should be located and replaced over time with safer materials." Well, there's been no program established to date, and I don't think we're going to see one before the next election. There are no requirements from the province for this from municipalities.

Okay, they must've done 46, because that's really an important one. Recommendation 46 says, "The provincial government should provide guidance and technical advice to support municipal reviews of water systems." It's not an onerous one, and no program is in place. It seems they're not even thinking about it.

How about recommendation 65? "The provincial government should develop a comprehensive 'source to tap' drinking water policy covering all elements of the provision of drinking water, from source protection to standards development, treatment, distribution, and emergency response." No guidelines as to target or acceptable

leakage rates have yet been adopted by this government over the past four years.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Ottawa-Orléans for his two-minute reply.

Mr. McNeely: I'd like to thank the member for Erie-Lincoln, but we're not taxing private wells, we're not taxing farm uses, we're not taxing municipal water supplies, so I think we have to keep that out.

This is a great bill, but think about Walkerton. Think about your past. Come out and support it. We'd really like that.

The member from Hamilton East, I thank you for your comments and I believe that this bill will do what we wish. It will take us forward and protect the Great Lakes waters. It is another step in what this government has been doing to improve the environment, to make sure our system is sustainable—that we are not using up all the resources and leaving our kids with nothing, and that seems often to be the philosophy out there.

The member for Peterborough, thank you for your nice words. I think it's really important that we all work together on this very important subject of water. We have great challenges that are going to come to us. Borders: Transport or shipment of water is always an important aspect. I am very pleased to see that the Minister of Natural Resources has been keeping tight with the eight states that surround the Great Lakes and with Quebec, and that we are working together to make sure that we're going in the right direction.

The member for Cambridge brought up Walkerton. I'm surprised that he would, with the record of Walkerton and the former government and the cutting of the environmental inspectors, etc. We heard the word "abundance." I hope you don't try to Hillierize this important legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I welcome the opportunity this afternoon to make a few remarks on Bill 198, Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act.

In the few minutes that I have to speak, I'd like to cover a couple of particular areas about this bill and about the kinds of implications the bill raises for people in my riding and in neighbouring communities, as well as deal with a couple of the specific issues raised by the bill itself.

To begin with, I think it's necessary to comment on the fact that this is, by anyone's judgment, close to the end of this government's mandate, and it seems to me passing strange that a bill that requires and in fact has a whole history of the necessity for something like this has not been addressed prior to now, that it has taken almost four years for this government to come up with something.

I have to say also, along with that fact is the other part of this bill which says that these rules wouldn't come into effect until 2009. So six years after the election promise was made is the very first opportunity that this government contemplates actually fulfilling that particular part

of its election platform. Even the government's own information refers to this as the first of several steps. I think we would probably all agree with that; we would just express surprise at the fact that it's taken the government so long to do so.

I don't think there's anyone who would dispute the importance of the question of safeguarding and sustaining Ontario's water. In fact, it made me think for a moment that if we look at issues of air and water, obviously we can only last a few minutes without air and a few hours without water. So clearly, these are very important things to be examining.

But I think it's important to recognize that there are some significant limitations about this bill. One of them is that while it talks about safeguarding and sustaining our water resources, while it proposes a ban on diversions out of the Great Lakes basin, it will still allow for large-scale diversions within the basin. This is something that needs to have a very fulsome understanding and debate, because people are becoming aware to a greater degree of the dangers of diverting water and the potential this could have, the further damaging effects to areas in the lower Great Lakes, particularly in terms of climate change.

So just in an overall general way, there are some specific issues that come out of this bill besides the two that I've mentioned.

I want to look at this issue of the question of diversions, because what the bill is suggesting in fact is that essentially Ontario, by its geographic relationship to the Great Lakes, would have some ability, if you like, to rearrange, interfere or certainly divert water from the Great Lakes in terms of its intra-diversion proposal, and I think that the importance of that is the fact that it then opens up the potential for the Americans to look at this as an advantage, if you like, or an opportunity that they wouldn't have, and I think this could create problems in the future.

1700

The bill does allow for Quebec and the eight Great Lakes states to appeal to the Environmental Review Tribunal or to seek judicial review of Ontario decisions on water withdrawals and diversions, but this section would not come into force until the other Great Lakes jurisdictions provide Ontario with the right to bring an application for judicial review in their courts. So you can see here that even in its drafting there's the recognition that this could be somewhat problematic.

I think that obviously the question, then, of the bill in relation to the basin agreements—by the way, this bill implements the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement that was signed in December 2005 by Ontario, Quebec and the eight US Great Lakes states.

The amendments to the Ontario Water Resources Act in this bill include section 34.3, which talks about the prohibition of inter-basin transfers, elevating a ban on diversions out of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin from being a regulation to being part of this act, but

Ontario already prohibits the diversion of water out of its three major water basins.

It was actually the previous government that implemented the policy which banned the transfer of water out of the basin in 1999. This proposed bill simply changes this ban from regulation into statute.

Obviously, the transformation from regulation to statute is important, but it's hardly the kind of initiative that would allow this minister and the government to talk about how it was groundbreaking.

One of the major problems with this is that we're still suggesting the opportunity for large-scale water transfers among watersheds within the basin—and these are the intra-basin diversions that I suggested. So the details, then, of the proposed amendments to the act which prohibit the diversion of water from one lake to another one certainly are subject to strictly regulated exceptions.

An exceptions standard sets out the criteria that must be met by applicants before these proposals will be approved. In terms of the exceptions standard, although water taken from the basin must be returned to the basin, as transfers from the basin are prohibited, there are no guidelines in this bill that stipulate the quality of water that must be returned to the basin. This is a glaring omission from a government that spends so much time touting their so-called leadership on the issue of water quality.

Subsection 34.6(3) enshrines in the OWRA the exceptions standard set out in article 201 of the Great Lakes agreement. The exceptions standard sets out seven criteria that must be met by applicants for proposals for new or increased transfers from one Great Lakes watershed to another.

The bill states that there must be no "significant ... adverse impacts" to water quantity or quality. The phrase "significant ... adverse impacts" is both vague and unclear and does not ensure Ontarians that the quality of their water will be protected.

So the issue of intra-basin transfers is a very significant concern for many stakeholders and groups concerned with this legislation. The potential is, of course, that it would have an impact on Ontario, degrading ecosystems and destroying fish, bird and wildlife habitat.

So the question, then, of the intra-basin issue is certainly one that is going to require a great deal of negotiation, work and I think recognition, as I mentioned a moment ago—the fact that it's only by the accident of geography that Ontario can claim this kind of exception when, obviously, the intent is that water will stay within the watershed.

I want to take a moment too, in terms of my own riding and the areas surrounding south Simcoe, for the kinds of problems we see there in relation to the question of protecting Lake Simcoe and providing the kinds of resources the lake needs in order to be able to continue to sustain itself. It's estimated that the lake provides about \$200 million worth of economic activity, primarily as a destination. We certainly look to this government to provide the kind of support it needs.

I was rather disappointed a few months ago when the Ministry of the Environment had given funds to the Lake Simcoe conservation authority to undertake an assimilative study. This was designed to provide governments of all levels with an understanding of the capacity of the lake and the kind of growth it could sustain in the least damaging way. Through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and its intergovernmental action plan, in fact they ignored the advice. This tends to create amongst our citizens a complete sense of frustration and lack of recognition of the good work that's done, when you have one ministry of government that sends people out, to the tune, by the way, of \$1.5 million, to provide advice to another level of government—and in this case, another provincial ministry that spent \$3 million—and they don't take the advice of the conservation authority and its best science.

Those kinds of issues become very serious issues for the people whom I have the privilege to represent. While they would recognize the importance of a water strategy for the entire Great Lakes, they naturally tend to think of themselves as people who live around the next Great Lake, the other Great Lake. Their disappointment, then, is in terms of this government's lack of initiatives that would give them confidence that they haven't forgotten the other Great Lake.

I also am reminded of the Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy plan, which has been supported over the years by governments of all political stripes. This government looked at the date of the current agreement, which expired at the end of March, and has simply signed for another year to maintain the status quo. Many of us were looking for some increased interest from the government in the lake and recognition of some of the most important issues it faces, one of which is an understanding of the phosphorus loading. This is one of the most critical monitors of the health of the lake. Just to give you an idea of how vital this issue is and the remediation that is required, the average cost of reducing one kilo of phosphorous in the urban parts of the watershed is \$5,000—one kilo. In the rural area, it is \$250. So when we're looking at the kinds of growth demands in the watershed, it's those kinds of figures that stand out as ones that need to be addressed and understood and, frankly, fall into the category of looking at water.

1710

I think this government has also missed a tremendous opportunity in not proclaiming Bill 175. If Bill 175 had been proclaimed, this would mean that more of the kinds of things that were in the O'Connor recommendations would actually be addressed. It's astonishing to me, for instance, that we still have municipalities that have lead service lines. In our own homes lead pipes have been gone for more than a generation. The notion that the water could be delivered in lead pipes by municipalities into our modern systems in our own homes is shocking. In recommendation 46, the provincial government was required to "provide guidance and technical advice to support municipal reviews of water systems." This government has done nothing in that area.

We have nothing that provides the notion of people conserving water. There are many people in this province who pay a flat fee for water. Well, I can tell you, as someone who lives on a well, I'm very conscious. If we've been six weeks without rain, I know that's going to make a difference in the water supply in my house. If you are paying a flat fee, you have no idea how much water you use. You have no idea how much is being wasted. The notion that you would pay according to your usage for your hydro but not for your water, this doesn't seem to me to be in any way conducive to conservation.

In Bill 175, municipalities would have to deal with the loss, the leakage that they have. This is something that costs all of us money. When we're talking about the importance, as the government itself has certainly demonstrated in its materials on this bill—everybody understands the importance of water, its conservation and its care, if you like, the need to continue to have a fresh supply of water.

I would suggest that there are a number of areas that this government is coming late to the table with this piece of legislation, ignoring the proclamation of Bill 175, ignoring part of the recommendations of O'Connor's report and, in my own area, not recognizing its commitments and the importance of the other Great Lake. I think you can see here that there's quite a bit more that this government should be undertaking than coming late to the table with a bill, Bill 198.

The only thing I could offer in terms of where we are in this bill is the fact that although we have only begun second reading, it is certainly a piece of legislation that I, for one, would support some significant public hearings on, if for no other reason than to broaden the public understanding of some of the challenges, some of the limitations of this bill and, frankly, some of the most important omissions in government water policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Questions and comments?

Ms. Horwath: I want to congratulate the member from York North on her remarks regarding this extremely important bill, Bill 198, which I think the member indicated in her remarks the government promised back in 2003. If you read the contents of the bill, you will discover that the implementation of it won't even come until 2009. So that's six years between promise and implementation, if in fact the government actually gets to the point of passing this bill through third reading and it receiving royal assent.

I say that because, once again, in their last-scramble attempt, as they watch the opinion polls do this, they're scrambling to get some of those promises fulfilled, and in that mad scramble they're throwing out these bills left, right and centre, bills that could have been far more effectively and appropriately dealt with with a proper amount of time and effort by the government. Instead, they thought, like Liberals always do, that they could coast along, breaking promises, disappointing community after community in this province. And now, guess what? The clock is ticking. As I said in my remarks, the tide is

almost all the way out on this government and, lo and behold, all of a sudden they're scrambling around to try to find out what else they can throw on the table to try to make people believe they're actually doing something on some of the really important issues that they promised the people of Ontario they were going to take care of in their mandate, and they simply have not delivered time and time again. So here we are at the 11th hour with a really important piece of legislation on water taking that needs to be dealt with in this province—one that I recall having the previous environment critic from our party deal with years ago when she was still here—and it's a shadow of what it should be.

Mr. Ramal: I've been listening for the last 20 minutes to the member from York North giving us a lecture about what we're supposed to do. I was wondering where that member was when she was part of a party that was the government of Ontario for eight years, neglecting all the rules and regulations that protect the people of Ontario. Look what happened in the Walkerton tragedy. I couldn't understand what she was talking about, but you know what? I was outraged and stunned by her remarks, giving us a lecture.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you something very important. It's a great bill. Whether it was introduced yesterday or a year before or today, when it comes to the people of Ontario, we promise to work very hard to pass that bill—hopefully if all members will support it—because it's an important bill. It's been talked about a lot, especially by my different colleagues here, about how important this bill is. I had the chance to speak for about 14 minutes about it and I explained what is important about it.

We are not alone in the province of Ontario. We have partners: the states around the lakes which surround the province of Ontario. We have to work with them. They promised us, and most of them came forward and signed the agreement. They're willing to work alongside Ontario to make sure that all of the water that goes into the lakes is clean and protected, because it's important to all of us.

Hopefully, the honourable member from York North will support the bill and stop giving us lectures. I wish she'd had the energy back when she was part of the government to lecture them to at least avoid the tragedy of Walkerton.

I'm honoured and privileged to be part of the government, taking everything seriously and working very hard to make sure that all of our elements, before our mandate is finished, are being looked after and tackled in a professional manner. That's what we promised the people of Ontario in 2003. That's what we're doing for them. It's never too late. We're going to work all the way to the end of our mandate to make sure everything's protected.

Mr. Chudleigh: In the days before election dates were known, we would look at a bill like this and say, "Yep, there's an election coming," because this bill doesn't do a thing in Ontario until after the election. In fact, this bill doesn't come into force until—what is it?—2009.

Dalton McGuinty made promises back in 2003, four long years ago, about what he was going to do to protect water, and then just before the date of the election comes in, he brings in a piece of legislation that adds another two years to doing nothing to protect Ontario's water, our greatest resource.

1720

The member for York North talked about a number of ways in which the government could have protected water, could have done more positive things to protect Ontario's water now—immediately—particularly those waters in the Great Lakes basin, which are the vast majority of the water that Ontario influences or that is our responsibility to protect. And yet, Dalton McGuinty's Liberals have continued to make promises and put off until after the election anything of substance: basically say anything to get elected, do anything to get elected, but do very little for the province of Ontario during their mandate, whether that be in the area of water or natural resources or endangered species.

The endangered species regulations are equally weak. The concept of protecting endangered species is a good one. The bill that was brought in just doesn't do the job, because it doesn't do anything about habitat, which is the only thing that's going to save endangered species.

This bill is very thin on doing things that are necessary to protect Ontario's water.

Mr. Hudak: I'm pleased to rise and comment on my colleague the member for York North on Bill 198. She, of course, has a command of not only the issue as a whole in the province of Ontario, but of the impact on her riding in the Lake Simcoe area.

As an MPP who has two Great Lakes in his riding, I don't know if we're willing to grant Lake Simcoe official Great Lake status quite yet. We guard that title very jealously. They argue on the American side that even Lake Champlain should be a Great Lake, but I don't know if I agree with that. I don't know if you've taken a position on the Lake Champlain issue or not, Mr. Speaker, but I'm going to stick with the Great Lakes we have. Lake Simcoe, if not a Great Lake, is a very good lake and should be protected.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: There are only so many lakes that deserve that. They've worked hard for millennia to achieve the status of Great Lake. Lake Simcoe is a very good lake but not quite a Lake Erie or a Lake Ontario.

Interjection: Take a stand.

Mr. Hudak: I have taken a stand in favour of the existing Great Lakes.

I have talked about an associated issue, as well, with the recent government actions against gas wells in the province of Ontario, which has caused my concern about wells and well water in Ontario and this government's potential action.

I don't have much time—maybe I'll get to it in debate later—but one example is a letter from Jack and Sue Den Besten of Wellandport, Ontario. They talk about a surprise visit to their gas well that they had from a

ministry inspector. They drilled a gas well to benefit their home and their two grain storage bins and dryer bins. It cost \$145,000. Six months after the well was drilled, Fernando, from the Ministry of Natural Resources, called and said that he had made a surprise inspection of the property. I'll get into this in debate, but after long and tortuous interaction with the ministry—they've been torn back and forth between whether it's a commercial well or a private well, all kinds of fees and regulations and such that seem to be administered in a very haphazard manner. I'll have more time later to address those issues.

The Acting Speaker: The member for York North has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Munro: I appreciate the comments by the members for Hamilton East, London—Fanshawe, Halton and Erie—Lincoln.

I found it interesting that the member for London—Fanshawe has very selective hearing in terms of the fact that I raised the issue of his government's reluctance to proclaim Bill 175. The remarks that were made by him suggested that we had never done anything on the issue of water. He clearly missed the point when I mentioned that there was a regulation that is now coming into this bill as a statute. Also, I just want to reiterate the question to the government: Why have you not proclaimed Bill 175? Why have you not done the questions around the Walkerton report that are not done? Why do we still have municipalities that can deliver water in lead pipes? Those are things that you have chosen, as I say, in suggesting that we, as members of the former government, had done nothing. In fact, much was done. I would ask the government, why not proclaim Bill 175? Those are important steps in continuing to make sure that we do have the best drinking water.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Marchese: I welcome the citizens watching this political channel—at least those who can, because as you know, Rogers has—

Mr. Hudak: Channel 105.

Mr. Marchese: For those of you who can get it, it's Channel 105 if you have Rogers. I don't know whether next year you'll have to start paying, some of you, \$8, \$9, \$10 to be able to watch this parliamentary channel. It should be free, but at some point you're going to be paying, so I am hoping that you are still able to watch this political forum here, because it's the best show around, I think, in terms of the great speakers we have in this place.

I am happy to speak to Bill 198, and I refer the citizens who are interested in greater detail to the remarks of my colleague the member for Toronto—Danforth, Peter Tabuns, our environmental critic, who spoke on April 12. So those of you who want to get into Hansard and check out what he said, I refer you to him because he had a lot more to say and a lot more detailed remarks to make on this bill than I can or will.

We're talking about water. The member from Toronto—Danforth pointed out what a precious resource that is, and not just for today, but for the future. In fact, I

dare say that we will fight wars over water in the near future. It's hard to predict when that will be, but it will come. And in the same way that we've got superpowers fighting for oil, in the same way that we've had superpowers in the Middle East for so long trying to—of course, under the guise of protecting, building, defending freedoms and helping those poor people there, because you know how bad they are—protect their oil interests, they will be around the globe looking for water one day, fighting for water. It's hard to predict when that time will come, but it is coming.

Mr. Hudak: In 2015.

Mr. Marchese: That's too soon, but you never know, you never know.

We know that the Americans are thirsty for water. The North American free trade agreement is about not just everything else that deals with trade; they'd love to get water and access to water. It's about having access to water, and this is something we should be protecting very much. They would love to start building water pipes to be able to get some of our water from our Great Lakes. So I say with some interest that this bill goes some way in protecting our interest from the great appetite that the Americans have for so many things, including and especially water. That day will come.

In this bill we talk about the ability of various people and organizations—groups of people—to use water, to draw water for important usages that I, quite frankly, support. The taking of water for domestic purposes by a municipal drinking water system or public utility—I believe that most people think it's a good thing to be able to do that. Most people, I suspect, would support that. We need to have water for municipal drinking water. So that isn't the problem, and we agree with that.

Taking water for the watering of livestock or poultry is, I suspect, something that all members of this Legislature agree with. So within the bill we protect the use of water for that purpose, and I obviously support that.

The taking of water for firefighting and other emergency purposes we think is good, and I suspect all members of all three political parties in the Legislature support that.

1730

There are some issues of concern we have that the member for Toronto—Danforth raised that I want to raise. There is the possibility of taking—not “taking”; I'll rephrase it. What this bill does is to ban diversion out of basins but still permit large diversions between individual Great Lakes within the basin. Although some of the members think this is a not a problemo, a lot of us believe that it is a problem that needs to be addressed by us, by the Liberal government. I don't believe you Liberals have done an assessment of the implications of this. Taking 379,000 litres a day, and 19 million litres a day for this diversion purpose, intra-basin transfer, we believe is going to cause a great deal of problems for us all. If we're talking 19 million litres a day, multiplied by 50, 100 or more days, we're getting into billions of litres of water. That's a whole lot of water. I can barely count past

a million. I don't know how many of you are able to count past that. We're talking billions of litres of water being drawn. Can you, Doctor? Some of you guys are good mathematically.

The whiz kids, the mathematical types, have to respond to the problem of what it means to take 19 million litres a day times, I don't know, 50, 100, 200 days, that much water out from one lake and allow it to be diverted from another lake, and what it means to so many ecological consequences that I suspect that would have. Have we assessed the ecological effect of doing that? My sense is that we haven't looked at the consequences or what it may do to the hydro-electric production at Niagara, the effect it might have on the wetlands surrounding any one of these lakes or all of those lakes.

The question that the member from Toronto-Danforth asked, and that I ask all of you, is, have you done an assessment of the ecological implications of doing that or do you simply assume that there are none? There may be no political implications—possibly. On the other hand, there may be with the US states. But I suspect that there are ecological implications that you should be speaking to. That's why the member from Toronto-Danforth raises that question. I believe it is an important question. What is the aggregate impact of taking 19 million litres per day times 100 days?

I want to move on to another question that is raised in your bill, and that is that you say you want to protect your water sources and you have to have a source of income to protect them. You want to charge \$3.71 per million litres to generate, we are told, \$18 million a year, essentially the cost of administration. Not the cost of water conservation programs, not the cost of water quality protection, not the cost of water quality surveillance—just the cost of administration. You made it appear in your ministerial announcement that you were finally going to go after the corporate sector that's raiding our water for free at the moment, that you were finally going to stop that from happening by charging \$3.71 per million litres. How are you going to do that? How, Minister, have you frightened these corporations that are sucking the water out of the ground by charging a fee of \$3.71? They must be trembling in their boots. I just don't know how you're going to stop their quivering, for God's sake. Surely you must be having consultations with them on a regular basis to say, "Please, please, hold on. Don't be so afraid. It's not going to hurt you so badly. Don't wage a war against us Liberals on this basis. It's not going to bankrupt you." I suspect you're having regular consultation meetings with these folks to stop the quivering, because they must be trembling in fear—\$3.71. That's your plan to scare the water-bottling corporations from taking the water out of the ground? I don't know how you can stand up there as a minister and as a government, defend that and say, "We are finally going to go after the corporate sector that's draining our water from the ground." It's almost laughable. You shouldn't even say that; you should simply say, "Okay, we're going to charge a minimal fee to just cover some of our administrative costs." But please, you're embarrassing

yourself and the public's intelligence when you're saying, "We're going to stop the corporate sector from raiding our water through this charge." Do you understand what I'm saying, Minister? Surely you're on my side in this. If I had to defend that, I would be quivering with shame. I don't understand how some of you could stand up proudly and say, "This is how we're going to do it." Surely there's got to be a better way.

In Britain I understand the fee is incredibly higher, much higher. Here, the minister is reported to be saying, "Oh, no, we don't own the water. Therefore, we can't do much more than this." I don't understand that. Surely you've got to have a better plan. Man, how strong you are, Minister. I'm glad you're standing there, strong in your place, defending our water and saying to them, "This is how we're going to do it: \$3.71 per million litres." This is a whole lot of water they're taking, at \$3.71 per million litres. Do you know how much they sell this bottled water for, most of which comes from the tap?

Mr. Hudak: A buck eighty-nine.

Mr. Marchese: Sometimes a buck, sometimes a buck fifty, sometimes two bucks, sometimes \$1.89, depending on where you are. Sometimes, depending on the event you're at, if you don't have access to water, they can charge \$2.50. We're talking little bottles of water, half of which come from the tap. How do we do that? How do we accept the fact that we're drinking bottled water that they suck out, some of which comes from the tap, they're charging us an incredible fee, and then you go slap them with \$3.71 for the million litres of water? Man, you guys are really tough, I'm telling you. I don't know how you brave the corporate sector and the people out there, who obviously must be incredibly supportive of your initiative. I don't know how you brave them, and I don't know how you defend yourself, with them or against them.

Mr. Leal: How much would you charge?

Mr. Marchese: How much would I charge? You get the limousine and then you get to ask the opposition, "How much would you charge?" Why don't you give up your limousine, come over here, and then decide what you would charge for the water?

Mr. Leal: You had one. I remember when you came to Peterborough. I thought you were the Premier.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, yeah. You guys are good. That's why you guys are so much loved by the public these days. It's great to see it. Then here's the other thing.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Marchese: Yes, you've got to be in your own seat. Remind them; otherwise, he can't shout so much. Besides, I prefer it when you're here, closer to me, than so far away. I like you here, member from Peterborough.

Then there's the other thing that I found very—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. The member from Peterborough, if you want to speak, go to your seat.

Mr. Marchese: No, I don't mind it, really. I like him. Here or there, it doesn't really matter.

The other great announcement—and this we learned at the press conference—is that this incredible charge that’s going to be slapped against the corporate sector is not going to happen immediately, because I presume the effect of the \$3.71 is going to be so onerous on them that they need time to adjust to that incredible cost that is being imposed on them. So you said, “No, we can’t have them pay today. We’re going to slap this cost on the corporate sector in 2009,” because presumably they need an adjustment.

Everything the Liberal government does is rolled out over an incredibly long period—everything. Every announcement has a date that extends itself into the future. Some of those dates go beyond their second mandate, should the public be unintelligent enough to re-elect them. Everything they do has to do with announcing something in the future. Two examples: The minister for post-secondary education says, “We are making a \$6.2-billion contribution to post-secondary education.”

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Mr. Leal: Reaching higher.

Mr. Marchese: Peterborough got it: the reaching higher plan. The \$6.2 billion is rolled out until 2010. They made this announcement two years ago. Do you understand? The roll-out is a long carpet. By the time you get there, you’re dead. Some of you are not going to survive it: 2010, and \$4 billion of that \$6 billion won’t come until 2010. Four billion dollars comes after you get un-elected. As for the \$2 billion that you claim you’ve given, we can’t find all of the numbers for your \$2-billion claim.

Then there’s the other announcement, by the Minister of Education, on capital projects. She says, and the Liberals claim, that they’re spending \$4 billion on capital projects. The problem is that that money is never to be seen, and it never flows. They were going to spend \$275 million. I know the Minister of Culture is squinting in her attempt to comprehend what I’m saying, but try. They were going to spend \$275 million to generate \$4 billion worth of money, and the first phase of that money, in four years, was to be \$75 million. Of the \$75 million, they’ve only spent about \$20 million. But if you hear the Liberals, including my good friend from Peterborough, he’ll say, “We’re spending \$4 billion for capital projects.” They keep saying that. The minister for universities is saying the same thing: “Our commitment is \$6 billion,” as if he spent it yesterday.

There’s a rollout of these things over six years, four years, and in this particular bill the rollout is 2009: \$3.71 per million litres of water. Imagine this charge and how it’s going to crush the corporations. It’s going to prevent them from raiding our water.

Mr. Leal: For sure.

Mr. Marchese: The member for Peterborough just likes to play the game. He said, “For sure.” It’s too laughable to even talk about it. I want the Liberals to take their time to defend this and refute the arguments; and not just in the two minutes, but when we go around, if we have time, take some time. Defend yourselves and hopefully intelligently, if you can. You know how embar-

rassing it is when you have to hear certain arguments and the defence is so weak that people like me weep, holding my head in my hands, saying, “Oh, my God, what am I doing here?” You don’t want to do that to me.

So we’ve got water that is a precious resource. We need to protect it. The bill goes some way into solving some of these questions and dealing with the problems we have with the US states and our own lakes. You have a big problem in terms of allowing the diversion of water from one lake to the other. This diversion of water could be in the billions of litres. It will have ecological implications, and you need to speak to that. You can’t simply say, “We’re diverting, but it will all go back somehow.” I don’t see it. That simple explanation simply won’t do it. You divert water from one basin to the other, and you say that, miraculously, it will simply go back. There are implications and you should speak to them.

The problem of cost: Please deal with the laughable number. If I’m laughing at you, I’m assuming that the regular citizen is going to laugh at you as well. And please deal with the fact that if you’re going to impose this minimal cost, you can do it today. You should change that. Do it today and say, “As of tomorrow, we’re going to crush you with \$3.71 per million litres of water.” I think you can do it today. I hope you will do that today. I hope the hearings will allow people to tell you that. I suspect that you good, reasonable Liberals will change your minds on a number of these things.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: I must say that the member for Trinity–Spadina if he was an actor in his previous life.

Interjection: He’s a singer.

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: I know he’s a singer. I have to say that he adds great colour to the Legislature just by his acting abilities. They’re quite remarkable.

I do want to say that this act takes some significant steps forward. It’s moving forward progressive steps to protect our water. In the Great Lakes we have the largest freshwater system in the world, and it’s important that we take some of these steps.

One of the things that concerns me—sometimes I see that the federal government isn’t coming to bat—has to do with foreign species that are in the Great Lakes. I understand that there are now about 68 of them. If we really want to talk about some action—I know we’ve taken various steps to try to deal the jurisdiction of the province when it comes to what we have to do for the Great Lakes—there is this issue of the species. I don’t know exactly where the federal government is on this, but they seem to be missing in action. It’s playing havoc with the ecosystem in the Great Lakes. They know this, and they know exactly what they have to do to prevent more of this. It’s really endangering the ecosystem in the Great Lakes. I don’t know if anybody here understands the significance of what’s happening with these foreign species coming in through ballast water and in other ways from ships. As I said, I couldn’t believe it is 68 species.

We have a lot of steps that we have taken. There is more that has to be done, but I think we've made some progressive moves to protect our Great Lakes.

Mr. Hudak: I always enjoy the comments of my colleague for Trinity–Spadina. He's right that bottled water can be expensive. If you go to see a ball game, for example, it's \$2.50. I guess they put a little bit of extra salt in the peanuts or popcorn or whatever so they can make you pay those prices or more. Whether it's baseball or hockey, or even when you go to the movie theatre, right? At movie theatres, bottled water is extremely expensive. Those massive things of pop aren't exactly cheap either, and who would want that much of a beverage, no matter how tasty that beverage could possibly be?

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Not as much as I used to, let me tell you. That's for sure. I don't see as many movies as I used to.

My colleague talks about Bill 198 and expresses some of his concerns. I know that he, among others, has talked about some unfinished business. The McGuinty government, we recall, made a number of commitments; for example, to make good on all the O'Connor recommendations. We are now three and a half years into the McGuinty mandate, and likely not much more time that the House will sit before the election, planned for October 10 this year. We will see if those promises do occur or if they will be broken, like many other promises.

One that I would certainly hope to see the government fulfill—and I know my colleague the minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal is here this evening—is to see the regulations come forward for Bill 175.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): It's the Ministry of the Environment.

Mr. Hudak: I know the Minister of the Environment will be responsible for proclamation of the regulations, but the minister will play a role in the infrastructure funding to back that up for our municipalities. In my riding, for example, Wainfleet has been turned down three times for COMRIF funding. It's simply unaffordable for people along the shore of Lake Erie to pay bills up to \$30,000 for water and sewer along the lakeshore, and I hope there will be an opportunity for the minister to fund that, and that we'll see Bill 175 proclaimed.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to join the debate and make some comments on some of the statements previously made by the member for Trinity–Spadina.

My riding is Oakville, which is on the shores of Lake Ontario. We're an old community that has two harbours, and the links between the community and the lake are something you just can't ignore. In fact, the only reason Oakville is there is because of the lake and the creeks that flow into it. I think that here in southern Ontario, and in northern Ontario when you get around Superior—some of the north shores of some of the states that surround some of the lakes—we've got a natural resource that we take for granted.

When I'm talking to the younger people, as I often do, they ask me why they can't swim in the lake anymore.

The answer is quite simple: Previous generations have mucked it up. It's that simple. Now this generation is starting to realize that it needs to do something about it.

1750

I heard some of the comments today that were going all over the place. I think we need to get back to what the basic premise of the bill is, and that is, if this is passed, it's going to implement an agreement that has been signed already. The agreement was signed 16 months ago. What the government is asking the Legislature for is to give it approval for some legislation that would enact the bill.

I don't know how anybody could argue with the premise of this bill. Is there more work to be done? Absolutely. We have to undo generations of damage to that lake. Lake Ontario specifically is the one I'm most familiar with. So it's a good first step. Is it everything? No, I don't think anybody is saying it's everything, but it's something that is worthy of support. My friend from Trinity–Spadina is intent, when they talk about job losses, on crushing corporations. Why would you want to crush corporations in Ontario? You want to charge them fairly, but why would you want to crush them?

Mrs. Savoline: Water is one of our most precious resources. Having led a municipality that took its responsibility in providing clean, safe water very seriously, long before stringent rules came along, I understand the importance of protecting and safeguarding our clean, safe water. It is a right, I think, of everyone who lives in the world to have clean, safe water. In Ontario, we are probably one of the most fortunate provinces in that we have an abundance of it. It's how we look after it, how we treat it and how we deal with it.

I guess my concern here—as with a lot of the initiatives that have been begun in the last three and a half years—is process and the lack of process that I think is extensive enough that it allows laymen to get a grasp of the importance of the issue and be able to speak on it. I think the timeliness of this bill coming forward so late in the mandate gives it at least the perception, if not the reality, of being rushed through. The due public process that I think this bill should be given is obviously not going to happen.

So I believe that the bill lacks process. The subject lacks the ability in time in a process. I feel that the people of Ontario ought to have the opportunity to understand the issue in a more fulsome way and to be able to speak on it. In order for that to happen, I think this just needs more time.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Trinity–Spadina has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Marchese: I do thank the members for their two-minute responses, including the Liberals.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: That's very kind. You're a generous man.

Mr. Marchese: My pleasure. I agree with much of what the member from Oakville said except his conclusion, where he says, "Why do you want to crush the corporations by charging a fee higher than the \$3.71?"

I'm sorry, it was your minister who said, "We're going to prevent the corporations from raiding our water." How are you doing that? How? I assume that the way you are going to do that is through your fee, but your fee doesn't do it. I scramble in my mind to find what other measures you may have to prevent them from raiding our water, and there's nothing else. That's my problem that I have in relation to the issue of cost, I've got to tell you.

In relation to that, there is a fear that we are commodifying water, but we already are. We already permit corporations to take water out of our ground. They are permitted to take it for free, and they're charging incredible prices for that precious water, including using the clean tap water—however clean it can be when you include all of the chemicals that we're ingesting—but

40% of that water comes from the tap. So we are already permitting corporations to take the water out, and if we're going to do that, we've got to say to them: "Sorry, you've got to pay for that."

Why should we be paying close to \$1—and in some cases \$2—for a bottle of water? Why would that be? Why would we allow that? Why would you allow the diversion of water between lakes—intra-basin—which, when you multiply the billions of litres, is going to have ecological questions? Why haven't you considered the ecological cost of that?

The Acting Speaker: The time now being nearly 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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